

A systematic review on social, cultural and individual influences on the beliefs, attitudes and behaviours of South Asian women regarding asymptomatic screening for female cancers

Principal Investigator, Dr Steve Brown, Department of Psychological Sciences, University of Liverpool. Co-Principal Investigators, Pooja Saini, Department of Psychological Sciences, University of Liverpool, Mr Mysore Chandrashekar, Royal Liverpool and Broadgreen Hospital NHS Trust.

Partners for the project include, Professor Anil Jain, University Hospital of South Manchester NHS Foundation Trust, Professor Kinta Beaver, University of Central Lancashire, Research Associate (pending appointment), Department of Psychological Sciences, University of Liverpool, Research Nurse (pending appointment), Royal Liverpool and Broadgreen Hospital NHS Trust, Eleanor Kotas, University of Liverpool, Saima Rashid, Asian Women Breast Cancer Support Group, Naheed Tahir, Service User.

The incidence of some female cancers in South Asian women, such as breast cancer, are equal to and exceed national rates and are rising. South Asian women diagnosed with female cancers have poorer relative survival rates than the national average. Full reasons for this are unclear, but poorer survival is partly attributable to South Asian women's lower uptake of screening opportunities, which is attributable to cultural factors within South Asian populations.

We estimate that approximately 200 research papers have been published in the UK and internationally on factors influencing South Asian women's screening attendance. However, there has been no systematic collation and synthesis of this body of research with the intention of developing recommendations for health promotion practice in a UK context.

High cancer mortality in South Asian women occurs in a context of low social status. The UK 2011 Census shows that South Asian populations in the UK, particularly Bangladeshi and Pakistani women, experience greater deprivation than the national population. Thus, effective interventions in these groups will alleviate the social gradient in cancer mortality and morbidity attributable to this cultural group.



The purpose of this review is to collate information on all of the studies that have been conducted to date on South Asian women and asymptomatic screening for female cancers. This will allow us to synthesize the literature on cultural and individual beliefs and attitudes and their effects on individual women's screening attendance and willingness to consult health professionals for cancer symptoms. This synthesis will provide broad directions as to how to intervene with South Asian communities generally, and a more narrow focus on factors unique to constituent communities that make up Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Indian and Sri Lankan populations. This will inform Interventions directed toward early detection of female cancers in South Asian women from hard to reach communities. Such interventions could improve cancer mortality and morbidity outcomes in this group and help to reduce health inequalities.

The review aims to collate and synthesise information from previous studies on social, cultural and individual influences on the beliefs, attitudes and behaviours of South Asian women in relation to behaviours likely to facilitate early detection and treatment. This will form a framework to:

- shape policy on targeting relevant public health messages to the south Asian communities
- develop a platform for the development of an effective and culturally sensitive intervention for engaging South Asian women from hard to reach communities
- provide information for healthcare commissioners for how best to invest resources in areas with large South Asian ethnic groups

This review will contribute to the long-term goals of developing interventions that may help towards reducing health inequalities and improving outcomes by providing information to design the strategies for evidence-based initiatives, using local experience to develop community-based programmes and developing new projects targeting the South Asian communities and neighbourhoods with the poorest health outcomes.

The UK, 2011 Census shows that South Asian women, with the exception of some Indian groups, are lower on the socioeconomic gradient, are more poorly educated and are more likely to be unemployed due to ill-health. This review will provide the platform for an approach that has the potential to: improve health for one of the reported poorest groups in the UK; reduce the inequality gap between the South Asian women and the rest of the population; and, shift the gradient between south Asian women and the general population.

