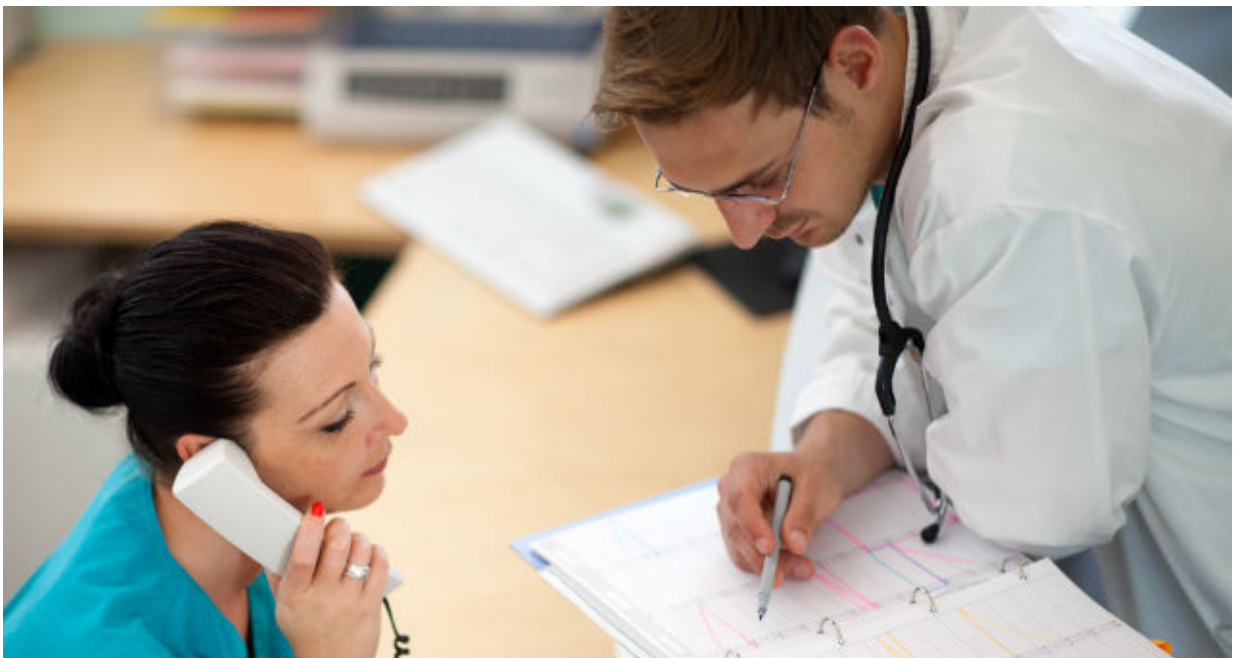


Worry about wasting GP's time stopping people from reporting cancer symptoms, new study finds

May 25 2016



Research published today in the *British Journal of General Practice* has shown that worrying about wasting their GP's time is stopping people reporting cancer alarm symptoms.

In the Cancer Research UK-funded study, researchers from the

University of Surrey and University College London explored the reasons why some [people](#) are more likely to worry about wasting a GP's time and delay reporting possible cancer symptoms.

Top reasons for delaying a visit to the GP included:

- Some people felt that long waiting times indicated GPs were so busy they shouldn't bother making an appointment unless symptoms seemed very serious
- Others felt their GP wasn't interested
- Some people felt that looking for help where their symptoms did not seem serious was a waste of a doctor's time
- People also reported feeling more pressured during a GP appointment compared to one with a nurse

This UK study of 62 people who reported experiencing at least one cancer alarm symptom in the last three months also looked at people who use GP services freely. These people believed that GPs cared about their patients and felt that the taxes they had paid meant they were entitled to use the service within reason.

This study is the first to investigate what makes people, despite experiencing symptoms that could be cancer, concerned about wasting their GP's time.

Dr Katriina Whitaker, co-author at the University of Surrey, said: "People worrying about wasting their doctor's time is one of the challenges we need to tackle when thinking about trying to diagnose cancer earlier.

"We need to get to the root of the problem and find out why people are feeling anxious. Not a lot of work has been done on this so far. Our study draws attention to some reasons patients put off going to their GP

to check out possible cancer symptoms."

Dr Julie Sharp, Cancer Research UK's head of health & patient information, said: "We've all had times where we've wondered if we should go to see a GP, but getting unusual or persistent changes checked out is really important. Worrying about wasting a GP's time should not put people off. Doctors are there to help spot [cancer](#) symptoms early when treatment is more likely to be successful. Delaying a visit could save up bigger problems for later. If you've noticed anything that isn't normal for you make an appointment to see your doctor."

Dr Richard Roope, Cancer Research UK's GP expert, said: "GPs always want to see patients with worrying [symptoms](#) as soon as possible. There's pressure on getting appointments across the country, and the next available routine slot might be some time off. But if the patient can't wait that long, many surgeries give other options - a same day appointment or the option of a telephone consultation.

"If they're worried then the GP will offer a face to face appointment sooner. Sometimes the patient may not be sure if a symptom is serious—in which case many surgeries offer appointments with Senior Nurse Practitioners who can escalate the problem. Very often the local pharmacy can also give advice."

Provided by University of Surrey

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