

Receptionists could put people off seeing their GP

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Forty per cent of people say that having to talk through their symptoms with doctors' receptionists could put them off going to their GP, according to an analysis of the Cancer Awareness Measure (CAM) published today (Tuesday) in the *Journal of Public Health*.

In a survey of almost 2,000 people in Great Britain, the most commonly perceived barriers to seeing a GP were finding it difficult to get an appointment with a particular doctor (42 per cent), or at a convenient time (42 per cent), and disliking having to talk to GP receptionists about symptoms (40 percent).

Women were more likely to report these barriers.

Those from a lower socio-economic background were more likely to report a number of possible 'emotional' barriers like worrying about what the GP might find, having tests and talking about symptoms.

They were also more likely to say they would be put off going to their GP if they couldn't see a particular doctor.

Across all groups, not wanting to be seen as someone who makes a fuss was a commonly perceived barrier to seeking help (35 per cent).

With UK cancer survival lagging behind other developed countries, it's crucial that action is taken to reduce the late diagnosis of cancer.

Dr Richard Roope, Cancer Research UK's GP expert, said: "Diagnosing cancer early is something we have to take seriously, so anything that might prevent people from getting their symptoms checked needs to be overcome.

"We need to ensure that patients are able to get appointments at a convenient time, can book an appointment to see a particular doctor and aren't put off coming to see them in the first place. This may mean more emphasis on training front desk staff including receptionists to deal more sensitively with patients.

"And it's vital that the recent investment from Government is used to attract talented people into the medical profession, which will boost the GP shortage. We need more doctors to cope with the growing number of people walking through their doors."

Dr Jodie Moffat, lead author and head of early diagnosis at Cancer Research UK, said: "There's still more to learn about the things that may put people off going to their doctor, and how important they are when it comes to actually influencing behaviour.

"But it's clear that a new sign or symptom, or something that has stayed or got worse over time, needs to be checked out by a GP. Don't let anything put you off. The chances of surviving cancer are greater when it's caught at an early stage, before it's had a chance to spread, and seeking help sooner rather than later could make all the difference."

Provided by Cancer Research UK

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