

Doctor and dad duo design new 'cancer maps' to aid diagnosis

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A GP has joined forces with his dad to invent a new online mind-mapping tool for doctors that aims to help GPs speed up cancer diagnosis.

Dr. Ben Noble, a GP at the Woodbrook practice in Loughborough and one of Cancer Research UK's 16 GP Leads across the country, teamed up with his dad Patrick Noble, a retired computer programmer, to develop the intuitive new diagnostic aid.

The innovative 'Cancer Maps' were developed to help make it easier for GPs to navigate the [cancer](#) recognition and referral guidelines published by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) in 2015.

Dr. Noble's brainchild has so impressed the medical community that it has been endorsed by NICE and the Royal College of GPs and will soon be rolled out across the UK.

It will also be used to help train GPs and other health professionals through Gateway C, an online cancer education platform for primary care.

The 'Cancer Maps' were piloted by 37 GPs from different regions, mainly in Leicestershire and Nottinghamshire.

The Cancer Maps consist of three different, brightly coloured maps

covering different organs of the body. The interactive tool is intended largely for use by GPs as an aid during consultations. If the doctor suspects cancer, the patient's age, sex and symptoms are keyed in and areas of the maps will light up, flagging potential routes for action. Results can be clearly seen by both doctor and patient alike, reassuring patients that the right steps are being taken.

As well as highlighting when a referral ought to be made – for example for a chest X-ray, a scan or for an urgent referral for suspected cancer – the user can also click on the relevant pathway for more detailed information about the NICE (National Institute for Health and Care Excellence) guidelines.

Over half (53 percent) of the GPs who tested the pilot Cancer Maps said using the tool during consultations prompted them to refer a patient for further investigation when they otherwise might not have done.

Feedback also showed the great majority of the GPs (94 percent) indicated they would recommend the tool to other healthcare professionals, and 9 out of 10 GPs said they felt more confident about making cancer referrals.

Dr. Noble said: "I've always used mind maps to help me make sense of lots of data – it's a habit I got into at medical school. Cancer diagnosis and referral is complex and requires GPs to keep abreast of a great deal of information as well as the appropriate NICE guidance. I realised it lent itself perfectly to mind-mapping.

"It started as something to help me in my role as Cancer Research UK's GP Lead for Leicestershire, but I soon realised it had further potential. I needed someone with a lot of technical know-how to help me design it, and my Dad was the obvious choice. I have the medical knowledge and he has the IT expertise, so together we were a perfect pair!

"I'm delighted the maps have had such a positive response from other professionals. A highlight for me came when a very respected colleague told me he kept the Cancer Maps open on his computer all the time. And 100 percent of patients who used the tool alongside their GPs have also given it the thumbs up."

Dr. Richard Roope, Cancer Research UK's senior clinical adviser, said: "Dr. Ben Noble's Cancer 'Mindmap' is an innovative tool, to help doctors understand and apply the NICE guidance on recognising and referring cases of suspected cancer. It's proving to be very popular with doctors of all levels of experience and in helping GPs to quickly appraise the best course of action for their patients, it's another item in the toolkit for supporting earlier diagnosis of cancer."

Provided by Cancer Research UK

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