
Summary

This practice is participating in a national research and surveillance programme that provides continuous monitoring of infection and disease in the community. This national monitoring network is a surveillance system which monitors changes in the incidence of disease and it is run by the Royal College of General Practitioners Research and Surveillance Centre. It has operated for the last 45 years and for much of that time was known as the Weekly Returns Service (WRS).

This leaflet provides information on this system and how information that we collect from your surgery is used.

1. What is the Royal College of General Practitioners?

The Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP) is the academic organisation in the UK for general practitioners (family doctors). Its aim is to encourage and maintain the highest standards of general medical practice and act as the 'voice' of doctors on education, training and quality issues. (www.rcgp.org.uk)

2. What is the Research and Surveillance Centre National Monitoring Network?

The Research and Surveillance Centre National Monitoring Network (a network of GP surgeries across England and Wales that contribute medical information to an electronic database. It is run and managed by a small team of highly skilled staff. The information collected by the network is used for the surveillance of a range of common infections and diseases that

doctors regularly diagnose during consultations with their patients. Its current focus is on spotting changes in infections and other diseases. We also research vaccine benefits and risks and antibiotic use and resistance. The [Research and Surveillance Centre National Monitoring Network](#) is funded by Public Health England.

3. Why is this network important?

"Surveillance" is the monitoring of infections and diseases in the community. Normally, this is important for knowing how common certain diseases are in the population. For example, we can monitor how much influenza there is during the winter, if this exceeds normal levels we can inform doctors and hospitals to warn them that they might expect to see increased numbers of patients. We can also monitor diseases that were thought to be rare, but are now increasing e.g. measles. Surveillance is also important for responding to specific incidents that might affect the health of the public. For example, during the pandemic of 2009, the RSC provided samples to observe the spread of the virus in the community and monitor the if the anti-viral drugs prescribed were effective..

4. How is information from each consultation used?

Each time that a patient consults with their doctor, the doctor enters information onto your record in the surgery computer system; this information includes the doctor's diagnosis of what he/she thinks is causing your symptoms or illness. Up to twice a week, we perform a search on the surgery computer system for information

about all new diagnoses that have been made during the last 7 days. These diagnoses include information about diseases e.g. influenza, other medical conditions e.g. heart palpitations, and also information about other activities in the surgery such as vaccination procedures. The data that are copied from the computer system are completely anonymised – this means that all identifying information such as names, addresses, date of birth etc. are removed from the record. This and the way we securely store the data ensures that you or other patients can't be identified from these extracted records.

5. How does it affect me?

All information is collected anonymously, and should not affect your care in any way. The information is extremely important for protecting the whole population and we hope therefore you will feel happy to contribute, though it does not involve you personally in any way. The project has been registered with the Information Commissioner's office (ICO) and we have taken all measures necessary to ensure that patient confidentiality is maintained.

However, there is a mechanism by which a patient can decide not to allow their information to be used. Please inform your doctor if this is your wish and he/she will see to it that your information will not be included in the anonymised database.

6. Where can I get further information from?

The RCGP RSC website provides free access to a variety of reports and scientific papers, which you can see by accessing the website yourself (see below). Alternatively, you can contact the Research and Surveillance Centre directly to discuss any aspect of the service that we provide (see below for contact details).

7. Further information

Royal College of General Practitioners:
www.rcgp.org.uk

Weekly Returns Service:
www.rcgp.org.uk/rsc

RCGP Research and Surveillance Centre:

Director:
Professor Simon de Lusignan FRCGP

Contact:
Director@rcgpbhamresunit.nhs.uk

Telephone: 0121 426 1125
Fax: 0121 428 2084



Research and
Surveillance Centre

**National Network for
the Monitoring of
Infection and Disease**

*Monitoring changes in the
pattern of disease &
effectiveness of treatment*

Patient
Information
Leaflet