



## **Study title:** Early Intervention & Referral of Patients with Head and Neck Cancer.

### **Topic Guide**

This study aims to explore the attitudes and perceptions of patients towards the role of pharmacists in the early identification and referral of patients with suspected Head and Neck Cancer (HNC).

The following guide outlines the key areas for exploration during the interview, which will also serve as a prompt for the researcher who is performing the interview.

#### **Introduction**

*Aim: To introduce the research and set the context for the proceeding discussion*

- Introduce self: University of Sunderland and Newcastle University
- Introduce the study: what it is about, who it is funded by
- Confirm participant has had the opportunity to read the participant information sheet
- Talk through key points
  - This will be a conversation where I will ask you questions
  - It will last approx. 30-45 minutes
  - There are no right or wrong answers
  - You don't have to answer all of the questions if you don't want to, just let me know that you want to move on
  - Participation is voluntary and participant can withdraw at any time
- Confidentiality/ anonymity
  - Transcripts will be anonymised
  - In report writing, any quotes won't be identified as being you
- The interview will be audio recorded
  - The recording will be kept secure, only accessed by the researchers working on the project
- I've brought the voucher for participation with me, so I'll give that to you after the interview
- This piece of paper is just to help me remember what questions I want to ask you, and I may make some brief notes during the interview to remind me to go back to something you said later on if that's ok
- Does the participant have any questions? Confirm consent form signed and participants consent to begin



## **Patients**

### **Background of participant**

Prompts: age, employment status, PMx, DHx, smoking and alcohol history, dental history, regular pharmacy, regular GP

### **Discuss current diagnosis**

Prompts: current diagnosis, stage of treatment/pathway

### **Presentation of HNC**

Prompts: what symptoms did they develop initially, awareness of any pre-malignant condition such as white patches/leucoplakia etc, when did they seek medical attention, how long after symptoms, who did they see, did they try any self-management strategies

### **Diagnosis**

Prompts: Where were they referred, who referred them, how long did they have to wait

### **Past experiences with pharmacy**

Prompts: How often do they frequent pharmacies, regular pharmacy or variable, when/why would they speak to the pharmacist, accessibility of pharmacists, understanding of pharmacist's roles and clinical skills, changes during the Covid-19 pandemic.

### **Perceptions of pharmacist's role in HNC identification/referral**

Prompts: thoughts on what the pharmacist's role could potentially be, acceptability of pharmacists making referrals, referrals to GP/dentist or direct to HNC pathways, concerns over unnecessary referrals/patient stress versus potentially missing a diagnosis

### **Risk Prediction Tools**

Prompts introduce ORLhealth tool, perceptions of use in practice, comfort with use of practice, perceptions on pharmacists using when consulting on such symptoms, barriers and/or facilitators to use in practice.



## **Pharmacists**

### **Background of participant**

*Prompts: experience, employment status, qualifications and postgraduate training*

### **Awareness of HNC symptoms and presentation**

*Prompts: awareness of prevalence, symptoms, any training on HNC, experience with HNC patients*

### **Discuss HNC symptoms if unknown**

*Prompts: how would you manage these in your pharmacy, when would you consider referring patients, who would you refer to, how would you refer, changes within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic*

### **Referral and Signposting**

*Prompts: More generally how would you make referrals and who to, how do patients respond, changes during the COVID-19 pandemic*

### **Risk Prediction Tools**

*Prompts: use of risk prediction tools in current practice/other conditions, introduce ORLhealth tool, perceptions of use in practice, comfort with use in practice, perceptions of barrier/facilitators to use, training needed to ensure optimal use of the tool*

### **Perceptions of pharmacist's role in HNC identification/referral**

*Prompts: thoughts on what role could be, acceptability of pharmacists making referrals, referrals to GP/dentist or direct to HNC pathways, concerns over unnecessary referrals/patient stress versus missing a diagnosis, previous experience of referring to a GP/dentist, do they perceive differences in their ability or likely positive outcomes if referring to a GP vs. a dentist*

**Next steps**

- Thank the participant
- Do they have any remaining questions about the research?
- Reassurance around confidentiality and anonymity
- Provide with gift voucher
- If they don't have further questions, would they like to be informed about the outcomes of the research, and if so method for doing this i.e. address/email correspondence