

ResearchOne Data Service, 2015/16 – YHAHSN-Funded Projects

Lay Abstract

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Improving the identification of adults with learning disability and related problems that affect understanding and self-management of long-term physical illness

Adults with learning disabilities often have poor physical health and don't use health services or screening programmes effectively. One difficulty in doing something to help is that it isn't easy to identify people with learning disability from health records. Our research in Yorkshire has confirmed previous findings that many people with learning disabilities are not identified on GP registers. For example local data show that there are 5 or 6 times as many children identified as having special *educational* as there are on GP registers identified as having special *health* needs because of learning disabilities.

We have explored three main ways to identify adults with learning disabilities and health needs [1] searching GP databases to identify patients using the usual ways that GPs have of labelling problems (called Read codes) [2] Refining GP search strategies by adding additional Read Codes that are not used usually used by GPs but have a high chance of identifying people who need help [3] encouraging coincidental case-finding in practice, by circulating reminders. Even with all these approaches we have been able to identify less than half of the numbers we think we should be able to.

What we want to do is work with ResearchOne to see if we can find new ways to identify people with any sort of learning difficulties who also have a long-term physical illness that could be better managed. If we can this will help improve healthcare by allowing GPs to identify better a group at high risk of poor health. It will also make it easier for researchers to include people with learning difficulties in their future research.