

Would you like to take part in research to help design online appointments for people receiving cancer surgery?

Study title: VOCAL - Virtual Online Consultations: Advantages and Limitations

Invitation and brief summary

We are a research team from University of Oxford, Barts and the London School of Medicine and Dentistry and Barts Health NHS Trust. We are studying whether Skype can make appointments with your cancer care team more convenient and more helpful for you. We don't yet know whether the technology is right for this sort of consultation so we want to try it with a few volunteers first and ask them about their experience.

Purpose of and background to the research

Our research team, which is led by a GP, is looking at the way in which online communications technology can help people receiving cancer surgery. We know that visiting the hospital for appointments can often be time-consuming or inconvenient and we would like to offer a way of "attending" these appointments by Skype. However we need to be sure that these Skype appointments are at least as good as a face-to-face appointment when it comes to the standard of care that you receive.

In order to understand the potential advantages or disadvantages of Skype consultations, we are conducting a detailed study of the patient-clinician interaction through such technology. We are inviting patients to use Skype to communicate with their clinician and tell us their views and experiences of using the technology. With your permission, we will video record one of your Skype consultations to help us understand how Skype can affect communication between patient and clinician. This research will help us understand how Skype can be used to provide better care for people receiving cancer surgery.

You don't have to agree to be part of this research. If you decide not to take part it won't affect your care.

What would taking part involve?

Participation in the study will involve using Skype to communicate with your clinician. You and your clinician will decide together when to conduct consultations via Skype. It is completely up to you as to when you use the Skype option. If you wish to have a face-to-face consultation at any point, instead of using Skype, then you can do so and resume the Skype option at any time during the study.

We want to study the experience of using Skype from the patients' perspective. A researcher will visit you at home during one of your consultations in order to observe how you find using Skype and ask your views about the advantages and limitations of using the technology. You can invite whoever you want to be with you when the researcher visits you.

The researcher would visit you at home to video record your Skype consultation. A video camera will be positioned unobtrusively near your computer screen to capture your interaction with the clinician. The researcher will also use a screen capture software tool to record screen images showing on your screen. The researcher will start and stop the recordings but will leave the room during the consultation. The researcher will not interrupt your consultation until you call them back into the room. When called back into the room, the researcher will check that you are still willing for the video material to be used in the research.

During the visit to your home, the researcher will interview you to find out more about your experiences with using Skype. During the interview, the researcher will ask you about your experience managing your condition, your views about how Skype can support communication with your clinician, and ways in which the technology or service could be improved. With your permission, the researcher would like to tape record the interview.

The video and audio recordings will be anonymised before anyone else sees it – your name will be “bleeped” and your face and other identifying features will be blurred. The visit will last about one hour in total.

With your consent, the researcher may also want to view selected parts of your medical record or nursing record related to your cancer surgery.

What are the benefits to taking part?

You will not benefit directly from the findings of the study, though we hope that the study will help us understand how Skype can be used to support and enhance care of people receiving cancer surgery.

What are the potential disadvantages and risks of taking part?

We understand that the time commitment and the process of having a researcher in your home can be potentially burdensome. The visit to your home will be approximately one-hour. The date and time for this visit will be completely up to you. If you decide to cancel or reschedule the visit at any point then that is absolutely fine. Participation in this study will not affect your standard care. You are still able to have face-to-face consultations with your clinician at any point during the study.

Why have I been invited?

You have been invited *either* because you have expressed an interest in using new technologies to help manage your health condition *or* because your doctor or nurse, carer has identified you as someone who might wish to do so.

Do I have to take part?

No. Participation is entirely voluntary, and you can change your mind about taking part even after the study has begun.

What do I do next?

If you would like to be involved in the study, please read the consent form and sign it.

Is it confidential?

All information you give is completely confidential. We won't tell anyone that you are speaking to us, though you are welcome to tell them yourself. All information will be held securely in strictest confidence. The data will be stored with its own unique identifying code and not with the participant's name or corresponding linkage details,

which will be stored separately. Only those directly involved in the research will have access to the data.

The research team may wish to use sections of the video recording for presentation purposes (e.g. training events, conferences, online publications). If you do not wish for the recordings to be used for presentation purposes then that is absolutely fine. You can indicate whether or not you would like us to use the video recording for presentations and/or publications on the participant consent form. If you do give permission for your video recording to be used in this way, we will still remove your name and all other identifiable information.

Who is funding the study?

The study is funded by The National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) under the Health Services and Delivery Research Programme, which aims to improve the quality, accessibility and organisation of health services in the UK.

Further information

The study team is led by Professor Trisha Greenhalgh, a medical doctor at University of Oxford who is also custodian of the study information. The other members of the team are Shanti Vijayaraghava (Diabetes Consultant, Barts Health), Satya Bhattacharya (Consultant General and Surgeon, Barts Health), Joanne Morris (Research Manager, Barts Health), Sara Shaw (Researcher, University of Oxford), Emma Byrne (Researcher, Queen Mary University of London) and Joe Wherton (Researcher, University of Oxford).

Thank you for your help!

The VOCAL research team

Every care will be taken to ensure your safety during the course of the study. Barts and the London School of Medicine and Dentistry and Newham University Hospital Trust have insurance arrangements in place for no-fault compensation, in the event that something goes wrong and you are harmed as a result of taking part in the research study.