

For numbered affiliations see

Correspondence to

London, London, UK;

s.janes@ucl.ac.uk

authors.

Dr Sam M Janes, Lungs for

Living Research Centre, UCL

Respiratory, University College

SLQ and SMJ are joint senior

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Telephone risk-based eligibility assessment for lowdose CT lung cancer screening

Jennifer L Dickson (a), ¹ Helen Hall (b), ¹ Carolyn Horst, ¹ Sophie Tisi, ¹ Priyam Verghese, ¹ Anne-Marie Mullin, ² Jonathan Teague, ² Laura Farrelly, ² Vicky Bowyer, ³ Kylie Gyertson, ³ Fanta Bojang, ³ Claire Levermore, ³ Tania Anastasiadis, ⁴ Karen Sennett, ⁵ John McCabe, ¹ Anand Devaraj, ^{6,7} Arjun Nair, ³ Neal Navani, ^{1,3} Matthew EJ Callister (b), ⁸ Allan Hackshaw, ² SUMMIT Consortium, Samantha L Quaife (c), ⁹ Sam M Janes (c), ^{1,3}

ABSTRACT

Eligibility for lung cancer screening (LCS) requires assessment of lung cancer risk, based on smoking history alongside demographic and medical factors. Reliance on individual face-to-face eligibility assessment risks inefficiency and costliness. The SUMMIT Study introduced a telephone-based lung cancer risk assessment to guide invitation to face-toface LCS eligibility assessment, which significantly increased the proportion of face-to-face attendees eligible for LCS. However, levels of agreement between phone screener and in-person responses were lower in younger individuals and minority ethnic groups. Telephone-based risk assessment is an efficient way to optimise selection for LCS appointments but requires further iteration to ensure an equitable approach.

INTRODUCTION

Lung cancer screening (LCS) using low-dose CT (LDCT) reduces lung cancer mortality in high-risk populations.^{1 2} Eligibility is determined by lung cancer risk calculations, comprising smoking history, demographic and medical factors. No comprehensive population-based system exists from which LCS eligibility can be determined, therefore necessitating individual risk assessment of all potentially eligible individuals. Up to 88% of adults approached based on age alone were ultimately ineligible for LCS.^{2 3} More targeted strategies including primary-care recorded smoking status or telephone screening of exclusion criteria (eg, current cancer treatment) still find 25%-50% of individuals ineligible at in-person assessment,⁴⁵ resulting in unnecessary appointments and potential distress.⁶

To reduce this inefficiency, the SUMMIT study introduced a telephone-based eligibility assessment ('phone screener') between the invitation and appointment to estimate individual lung cancer risk, in a similar approach to the Yorkshire Lung Screening Trial.⁷ This manuscript reports the feasibility and accuracy of the phone screener in the first 12 months of recruitment.

METHODS

The SUMMIT study is a prospective observational cohort study aiming to assess the implementation of LDCT for LCS in a high-risk population and to validate a multicancer early detection blood test. Study eligibility was assessed via a three-step process: primary care invitation, phone screener and faceto-face 'Lung Health Check' (LHC) (table 1). Potentially eligible individuals were invited by post from across north central and east London, with those meeting either US Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) 2014 criteria⁸ or prostate, lung, colorectal, ovarian (PLCO)_{m2012} 6-year lung cancer risk⁹ \geq 1.3% invited to undergo LCS as part of the study.

The initial phone screener (V.1) verified age and smoking status only; however, due to a high proportion of LHC attendees being ineligible for LCS, questions were expanded (V.2, conducted by National Health Service (NHS) band four staff), enabling estimation of USPSTF and PLCO_{m2012} criteria (table 1). Eligible individuals were offered an LHC appointment at which NHS band five staff (blinded to phone screener responses) asked questions and measured height and weight to accurately assess USPSTF and PLCO_{m2012} criteria (taken as the 'gold standard').

Analysis

The accuracy of phone screener-based estimation of eligibility was quantified by the proportion of responders subsequently eligible for LCS at LHC appointment. Levels of agreement for individual participant responses during phone screener and LHC (for specific questions and overall eligibility status) were compared with Cohen's Kappa (K) and interpreted as per Landis and Koch,¹⁰ for all LHC attendees and within age and ethnicity groups.

RESULTS

Effectiveness of telephone-based eligibility estimation on efficient utilisation of LHC appointments

Between March 2019 and April 2020, 30759 individuals responded to the LHC invitation. The first 3.6% (n=1111) completed phone screener V.1, the remaining 96.4% (n=29648) completed V.2 (figure 1). Significantly fewer individuals were eligible for an LHC using V.2 compared with V.1, (56.1% vs 86.9%, p<0.001). This resulted in an increased proportion of LHC attendees being LCS eligible (60.3%V.1 vs 82.6% V.2, p<0.001).



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Table 1Three step eligibility assessment for the SUMMIT Study andcomparison of data collected at phone screener versus Lung HealthCheck to calculate lung cancer risk

Primary care invitation	Phone-scree assessment		Face-to-face 'lung health check' eligibility assessment	
Age 55–77 years Current smoker within past 20 years Exclusion criteria:	Version 1: Verification of age and smoking status (smoker within last 20 years and more than 100 cigarettes in lifetime)		Calculation of: USPSTF 2014 criteria (30 pack-years of smoking and if a former smoker, have quit in the past 15	
Dementia register			years)	
Housebound			and/or	
Palliative care register or metastatic cancer Refused research	pack-years of a former smoothed the past 15 years	timate of 4 criteria (30 f smoking and if oker, have quit in years) and/or year lung cancer	PLCO _{m2012} 6 year lung cancer risk ≥1.3%	
Phone screener (V2) est cancer risk	imate lung	IHC assessme	nt of lung cancer risk	
Categorical variables		Categorical va	5	
Smoked >100 cigarettes in	n lifetime	5	igarettes in lifetime	
Age (from GP extraction)		Age (from GP extraction)		
Smoking status (current vs former)		Smoking status (current vs former)		
Ethnicity (PLCO groups)		Ethnicity (PLCO groups)		
			<u> </u>	
Highest level of education		Highest level of education		
History of COPD		History of COPD		
Personal history of cancer		Personal history	of cancer	

-	-		
Family history of lung cancer	Family history of lung cancer		
Continuous variables	Continuous variables		
Smoking duration	Smoking duration		
Smoking consumption (amount)	Smoking consumption (amount)		
	Periods of smoking abstinence		
Self-reported height and weight (BMI estimate)	Measurement of height and weight (BMI calculated)		
BMI, body mass index; COPD, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease; GP, general			

practitioner; LHC, lung health check; PLCO, prostate lung colorectal ovarian; USPSTF, united states preventive services task force.

Agreement between telephone screening and LHC assessments

For the 14714 individuals who completed phone screener V.2 and attended an LHC, the level of agreement between eligibility assessments conducted by phone screener versus LHC was fair (K=0.441) for USPSTF criteria and moderate (K=0.346) for PLCO_{m2012} criteria (table 2). Level of agreement between phone screener and LHC responses was substantial or 'almost perfect' for all categorical variables except educational status (K=0.347) (table 2). Statistically significant differences in mean pack-year history and body mass index were observed (table 2), but their magnitudes were unlikely to be clinically significant. The level of agreement for eligibility assessments was lowest in individuals from an Asian ethnic group and those aged 55-59 years and highest in the white ethnic group and those aged over 75 years (table 2).

DISCUSSION

We present the first reported data demonstrating the impact of a telephone-based lung cancer risk assessment tool on optimising

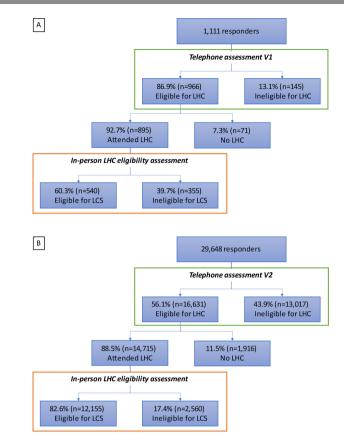


Figure 1 Comparison between version 1 (A) and version 2 (B) of the phone screener in refining the population eligible for LHC. LCS, lung cancer screening; LHC, lung health check.

selection for LCS appointments. Introduction of the multifactor phone screener significantly increased the proportion of ineligible individuals identified, resulting in fewer face-to-face LHC appointments. Phone screener and LHC responses showed high levels of agreement for most eligibility questions. However, lower levels of agreement were seen for educational status in all individuals, and for overall eligibility criteria in younger and minority ethnic groups. Lower levels of agreement for USPSTF criteria (vs PLCO_{m2012}) are likely explained by the greater influence of smoking consumption on this score. Ambiguous responses regarding smoking consumption during the phone screener were interpreted to maximise lung cancer risk estimates, allowing opportunity for face-to-face eligibility assessment for individuals with borderline eligibility criteria, which may account for some of this variation. With approximately 4-6 weeks between phone screener and LHC, responses may legitimately change between these timepoints. We are unable to assess the impact of potential data entry errors, but a minority of individuals were excluded due to implausible values, highlighting the need for real-time data validation. Finally, periods of smoking abstinence were included in pack-year calculations at the LHC (reported by 62.7%) but not during the phone screener.

Blinding LHC staff to telephone screener responses allowed LHC responses to be evaluated independently. However, comparisons could only be drawn for those who both responded to the LHC invitation and were eligible during the phone screener, who may differ to non-responders and those who were found to be ineligible at phone screener. From this non-randomised study, it is not possible to ascertain if those considered ineligible by telephone screening were truly
 Table 2
 Agreement between the phone screener questions and LHC assessments of (A) individual questions/eligibility criteria for all responders and (B) eligibility criteria across age/ethnicity subgroups

(A) All responders (n=14714)	Agreement between phone screener V2 and LHC
Categorical	Level of agreement between phone screener and LHC (%, Kappa*)
≥100 cigarettes in lifetime	99.9% (K=NA)
Current vs former smoker	94.4% (K=0.891, p<0.001)
Ethnic group †	95.8% (K=0.849, p<0.001)
Highest level of education achieved	53.4% (K=0.347, p<0.001)
Personal history of COPD	87.5% (K=0.692, p<0.001)
Personal cancer history	95.8% (K=0.816, p<0.001)
Family history lung cancer	91.1% (K=0.693, p<0.001)
USPSTF criteria	76.6% (K=0.441, p<0.001)
PLCO _{m2012} eligibility	82.2% (K=0.346, p<0.001)
Continuous	Mean difference (95% CI) between phone screener and LHC responses
BMI‡	-1.16 kg/m ² (-1.21 to -1.11)
Pack-year history§	2.87 pack-years (2.58 to 3.16)
(B) Agreement between phone sc	reener V2 and LHC eligibility criteria across different age/ethnicity groups

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	n	USPSTF criteria	PLCO _{m2012} eligibility		
Age (from GP data extract	ion)				
55–59 years	3643	71.0%	72.1%		
60–64 years	3727	76.3%	79.8%		
65–69 years	3541	79.6%	86.3%		
70–74 years	2718	79.5%	90.8%		
75 years +	1041	81.2%	91.2%		
Missing	44				
Ethnicity					
Asian	1343	69.2%	69.9%		
Black	796	68.8%	75.9%		
Mixed	356	73.3%	77.5%		
Other	629	70.7%	76.6%		
White	11 590	78.5%	84.6%		

*Level of agreement according to K values defined¹⁰ as 'slight' (0–0.2), 'fair' (0.21–0.4), 'moderate' (0.41–0.6), 'substantial' (0.61–0.8) or 'almost perfect' (0.81–1). tSummarised as three-category variable (Asian, black or white). n=2,013 (13.7%) declined to answer during the phone screener. Responses were mandated at the LHC.

‡n=114 excluded due to implausible values (weight <30 kg or >200 kg; height <135 cm or 200 cm). §n=103 excluded due to implausible values (>80 cigarettes per day or >280 grams of tobacco per week; smoking start age >smoking cessation age; smoking start or cessation age >current age; period of smoking abstinence >total smoking duration).

ineligible for LCS, and therefore the impact on the sensitivity of risk assessment, but this should be a small proportion.

telephone-based risk assessment as an efficient way to optimise selection for LCS appointments.

Further research should investigate validated multilingual translations, cultural variations with acceptability and inclusion of diverse educational categories to ensure equitability and accuracy. Additionally, efficiency gains resulting from the phone screener are likely to impact cost-effectiveness, which requires further evaluation alongside wider patient satisfaction and any potential added benefits of LHC attendance for ineligible individuals including cardiovascular risk assessment, spirometry and smoking cessation.

Existing studies demonstrate targeted invitations followed by in-person LCS eligibility assessment lead to inefficient resource utilisation. The data presented here support Author affiliations

¹Lungs for Living Research Centre, UCL Respiratory, University College London, London, UK

²Cancer Research UK and UCL Cancer Trials Centre, University College London, London, UK

³University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, London, UK ⁴Tower Hamlets Clinical Commissioning Group, London, UK

⁵Killick Street Health Centre, London, UK

⁶Department of Radiology, Royal Brompton Hospital, London, UK

⁷National Heart and Lung Institute, Imperial College London, London, UK

⁸Department of Respiratory Medicine, Leeds Teaching Hospitals, Leeds, Yorkshire, UK ⁹Centre for Prevention, Detection and Diagnosis, Wolfson Institute of Population Health, Barts and The London School of Medicine and Dentistry, Queen Mary University of London, London, UK

Twitter Arjun Nair @LUNGRADIOLOGIST, Samantha L Quaife @QuaifeS and Sam M Janes @lungsforliving

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Collaborators SUMMIT Consortium: Sam M Janes (Lungs For Living Research Centre, UCL Respiratory, University College London, London), Jennifer L Dickson (Lungs For Living Research Centre, UCL Respiratory, University College London, London), Carolyn Horst (Lungs For Living Research Centre, UCL Respiratory, University College London, London), Sophie Tisi (Lungs For Living Research Centre, UCL Respiratory, University College London, London), Helen Hall (Lungs For Living Research Centre, UCL Respiratory, University College London, London), Priyam Verghese (Lungs For Living Research Centre, UCL Respiratory, University College London, London), Andrew Creamer (Lungs For Living Research Centre, UCL Respiratory, University College London, London), Thomas Callender (Lungs For Living Research Centre, UCL Respiratory, University College London, London), Ruth Prendecki (Lungs For Living Research Centre, UCL Respiratory, University College London, London), Amyn Bhamani (Lungs For Living Research Centre, UCL Respiratory, University College London, London), Mamta Ruparel (Lungs For Living Research Centre, UCL Respiratory, University College London, London), Allan Hackshaw (CRUK & UCL Cancer Trials Centre, University College London, London), Laura Farrelly (CRUK & UCL Cancer Trials Centre, University College London, London), Jon Teague (CRUK & UCL Cancer Trials Centre, University College London, London), Anne-Marie Mullin (CRUK & UCL Cancer Trials Centre, University College London, London), Kitty Chan (CRUK & UCL Cancer Trials Centre, University College London, London), Rachael Sarpong (CRUK & UCL Cancer Trials Centre, University College London, London), Malavika Suresh (CRUK & UCL Cancer Trials Centre, University College London, London), Samantha L Quaife (Centre for Prevention, Detection and Diagnosis, Wolfson Institute of Population Health, Barts and The London School of Medicine and Dentistry, Queen Mary University of London, London), Arjun Nair (University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, London), Anand Devaraj (Royal Brompton and Harefield NHS Foundation Trust, London; National Heart and Lung Institute, Imperial College, London), Kylie Gyertson (University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, London), Vicky Bowyer (University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, London), Ethaar El-Emir (University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, London), Judy Airebamen (University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, London), Alice Cotton (University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, London), Kaylene Phua (University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, London), Elodie Murali (University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, London), Simranjit Mehta (University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, London), Janine Zylstra (University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, London), Karen Parry-Billings (University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, London), Columbus Ife (University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, London), April Neville (University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, London), Paul Robinson (University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, London), Laura Green (University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, London), Zahra Hanif (University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, London), Helen Kiconco (University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, London), Ricardo McEwen (University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, London), Dominique Arancon (University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, London), Nicholas Beech (University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, London), Derya Ovayolu (University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, London), Christine Hosein (University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, London), Sylvia Patricia Enes (University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, London), Qin April Neville (University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, London), Jane Rowlands (University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, London), Aashna Samson (University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, London), Urja Patel (University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, London), Fahmida Hoque (University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, London), Hina Pervez (University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, London), Sofia Nnorom (University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, London), Moksud Miah (University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, London), Julian McKee (University College

London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, London), Mark Clark (University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, London), Jeannie Eng (University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, London), Fanta Bojang (University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, London), Claire Levermore (University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, London), Anant Patel (Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust, London), Sara Lock (Whittington Health NHS Trust, London), Rajesh Banka (Barking, Havering and Redbridge University Hospitals NHS Trust, Essex), Angshu Bhowmik (Homerton University Hospital Foundation Trust, London), Ugo Ekeowa (The Princess Alexandra Hospital NHS Trust, Essex), Zaheer Mangera (North Middlesex University Hospital NHS Trust, London), William M Ricketts (Barts Health NHS Trust, London), Neal Navani (North Bristol NHS Trust, Bristol), Terry O'Shaughnessy (Barts Health NHS Trust, London), Charlotte Cash (Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust, London), Magali Taylor (University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, London), Samanjit Hare (Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust, London), Tunku Aziz (Barts Health NHS Trust, London). Stephen Ellis (Barts Health NHS Trust, London), Anthony Edey (North Bristol NHS Trust, Bristol), Graham Robinson (Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust, Bath), Alberto Villanueva (Surrey and Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust, Surrey), Hasti Robbie (King's College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, London), Elena Stefan (The Princess Alexandra Hospital NHS Trust, London), Charlie Sayer (University Hospitals Sussex NHS Foundation Trust, Sussex), Nick Screaton (Royal Papworth Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, Cambridge), Navinah Nundlall (University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, London), Lyndsey Gallagher (University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, London), Andrew Crossingham (University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, London), Thea Buchan (University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, London), Tanita Limani (University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, London), Kate Gowers (Lungs For Living Research Centre, UCL Respiratory, University College London, London), Kate Davies (Lungs For Living Research Centre, UCL Respiratory, University College London, London), John McCabe (Lungs For Living Research Centre, UCL Respiratory, University College London, London), Joseph Jacob (Lungs For Living Research Centre, UCL Respiratory, University College London, London; Centre for Medical Image Computing (CMIC), London), Karen Sennett (Killick Street Health Centre, London), Tania Anastasiadis (Tower Hamlets Clinical Commissioning Group, London), Andrew Perugia (Noclor Research Support, London), James Rusius (Noclor Research Support, London).

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ORCID iDs

Jennifer L Dickson http://orcid.org/0000-0002-9333-8320 Helen Hall http://orcid.org/0000-0001-7305-8367 Matthew EJ Callister http://orcid.org/0000-0001-8157-0803 Samantha L Quaife http://orcid.org/0000-0002-4918-6382 Sam M Janes http://orcid.org/0000-0002-6634-5939

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