Mark Pont, Assessment Programme Lead

Chris Roebuck
Chief Statistician
NHS Digital
(By email)

6 March 2020

Dear Chris

STATISTICS ON RECORDED DEMENTIA DIAGNOSES IN ENGLAND

We have recently conducted our review of the compliance of NHS Digital's Recorded Dementia Diagnoses official statistics against the Code of Practice for Statistics. This letter highlights our findings and recommendations.

We recognise the importance of having high quality statistics about dementia diagnoses that serve the public good. NHS Digital's statistics on Recorded Dementia Diagnoses demonstrate various examples of good practice. The statistics are timely, insightful and the producer team responds well when it identifies new user needs. For example, NHS Digital introduced statistics on patients with a dementia diagnosis and a prescription for anti-psychotic medication at a more granular level after a clear user need was identified.

We have identified three areas where we consider that the team should enhance the value of the statistics:

- NHS Digital engages regularly with NHS England and the Department of Health and Social Care, for whom this data collection was established. The team also engages regularly with the media to ensure that data are reported accurately. Wider user engagement is limited, however. As you are aware, as part of our review of these statistics we consulted with stakeholders to gain an understanding of who they are used by, how they are used and their overall value. Users from the charity sector identified improvements that they would like to see to the statistics and told us about some unmet needs. NHS Digital should take steps to understand the needs of the broadest possible range of users, including charities, to maximise the public value of these statistics.

- Our review also highlighted that methodological information such as the calculations for estimated rates of dementia is not always easy to find in supporting documentation, nor is it easy for a non-expert user to understand. We welcome your plans to improve this accessibility and encourage you to seek user feedback on any developments made to ensure that they ease the use of these statistics.

- Users informed us that they require more-granular data, for example, on subtypes of dementia. NHS Digital should take steps to implement the views received from users, where practicable, to ensure that the statistics and data are as relevant as possible. We encourage NHS Digital to keep an open dialogue with commissioners of the data and push for changes to data collection where a clear user need is identified.

We welcome your team's motivation to improve these statistics and would like to thank both you and your team for your positive engagement throughout this review process.

Our Health and Social Care domain looks forward to continuing to engage with you and the team on these and other health statistics.

I am copying this letter to Robert Danks (Principal Information Analyst, Primary Care Domain).

Yours sincerely

Mark Pont
Assessment Programme Lead