

Ageism and age discrimination in secondary health care in the United Kingdom

Appendix 1 - Methodology

Scope of the review - a rapid literature review with its key focus on potential age discrimination in the provision of secondary health services in the United Kingdom. The secondary health study was to consider vascular, renal, cancer, diabetes and Parkinson's Disease services, but in effect at all areas of secondary health care including hospital discharge and the transition to social care. All aspects of secondary health care including diagnostic and screening services, training, transparency and choice, probability and risks, frailty and cost effectiveness of procedures and services (QALYs) were considered.

Mental health services were specified as outside the remit of this report except the possible case of multiple conditions, both mental and physical. Age discrimination in mental health services was looked at as part of an earlier CPA review and is also now the main subject of a companion volume to this review. It is considered to be a prime example of institutional age discrimination and is briefly mentioned as such in this report.

The review was carried out in February, March and early April 2009.

1. Evidence of age discrimination

To facilitate recognition of the different types of evidence presented in this review, a brief and simple classification has been used. Category labels have been added to the reference citations in the body of the text to provide an at-a-glance guide.

This does not claim to be a comprehensive and exhaustive classification of evidence but an at-a-glance rough guide to help the reader.

Large survey	Sample survey of 800+ from a large population
Survey	Sample survey of 120-800 from a large population or 50%+ from a small population. We will use the generic term <i>survey</i> to include retrospective case audits.
Small survey	Sample survey of less than 120 from a large population or less than 50% of a small population
Group study	Focus group, panel or equivalent study
Study	Individual research project, observational study or analysis not carried out as a group study or survey
Opinion	Opinion of a respected authority, editorial etc.
Systematic review	Systematic review, with or without meta analysis
Review	Literature and other reviews not structured as a 'systematic review'
Policy document	Government or professional overview
Campaign document	Document to promote a particular point of view
Guide	Guide, information pack or toolkit

2. Literature search

- Databases
An online search of Ageinfo, Ageline, Applied Social Sciences Index and Abstracts (ASSIA), BBC News Archive, BLEPS Catalogue, Cochrane Library, Combined Academic and National Research Library Catalogue (COPAC), Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health (CINAHL), Dissertation Abstracts, Econlit, ERIC, Gerolit, HEED: Health Economic Evaluations Database, Health Information Management Consortium (HMIC), International Bibliography of the Social Sciences (IBSS), ISI Web of Knowledge, Medline, National Database of Ageing Research, Social Care Online, Social Policy and Practice, Social Science Abstracts and Zetoc were supplemented by hand scanning of key journals, plus a scan of citations in key texts located.

The searches of mainstream broad coverage multi-journal databases were supplemented, where possible, by searches of individual specialist journals or databases covering the content of groups of journals by the same publisher. Journals databases covered included Oxford Journals (including Age and Ageing), Cambridge Journals (including Ageing and Society), BMJ Journals (including BMJ, Heart, Journal of Medical Ethics), Reed-Elsevier (a large number of medical journals including Resuscitation)

Databases such as Ageinfo cover grey literature, semi-published materials such as pamphlets and reports as well as peer reviewed journal articles.

3. Web searching

- Google and Google Scholar searches of the web were supplemented by searching and browsing key web sites including...
 - Age Concern England
 - Age UK
 - Arthritis Care
 - British Geriatrics Society
 - British Medical Association
 - Cancer Research UK
 - Department of Health
 - Help the Aged
 - Institute for Public Policy Research
 - Kings Fund
 - Macmillan Cancer Support
 - National Council for Palliative Care
 - National Institute of Economic and Social Research
 - National Osteoporosis Society
 - Parkinson's Disease Society
 - Royal College of General Practitioners
 - Royal College of Nursing
 - Royal College of Physicians

- Royal National Institute for the Deaf
- Stroke Association
- University of York Centre for Reviews and Dissemination

4. Other methods

- Database and web searching was supplemented by browsing reference lists in key articles and the contents and index lists of selected journals.
- Attempts were also made to contact key individuals likely to have knowledge of materials and studies appropriate to the review.

5. Search strategies

- A search strategy was developed to help locate materials on the various databases and on the web, but the strategy could not be applied blindly or uniformly because of restrictions in the search capabilities of each database.
- Except in the case of Ageinfo, where searching was carried out by the CPA staff who index the database, most searching was of free text fields. This maximised recall, the amount of relevant material found, but reduced precision (the proportion of initially retrieved material that is relevant). Material found not to be relevant was removed by hand.
- Because the target studies were likely either to be very small in number or not to exist at all, it was decided to adopt a series of broad based search strategies that were likely to find all related material at the expense of precision. Extraneous material was removed by hand.

6. Top level search facets

- **Age** (not to be used in specialist age related databases, Ageline, Ageinfo)
typical search terms: *older people, elderly, ageing , aging , ageism, 'age discrimination', 'age equality'*

AND

- **Health care** (broad terms not to be used in specialist health databases eg Medline)
typical search terms: health care, primary care, secondary care, individual services eg vascular, heart, cardiology, renal, kidney, cancer, diabetes, osteoporosis...

AND

- **Discrimination / Rationing**
typical search terms: discriminat*, ration*, ageism, inequal*, equal*, unequal*
- Search terms such as Ageism and 'Age Discrimination' combine the 'Age' and 'Discrimination' facets

- Primary and Secondary health care were not discriminated at the search stage since many references may be relevant to both. Initial search results were restricted to the past 20 years 1989-2009

7. Search strategies in practice

- A guideline general database search strategy is

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"age discrimination"; ageism; ration*; inequalit*; unequal
AND
health; hospital;"primary care"; "secondary care"; vascular; heart; cardiology; renal;
kidney; cancer; oncology; diabetes; osteoporosis; physiotherapy; "occupational
therapy"; "foot care"; chiropody; dentist*; parkinsons; vascular; ischaemic; coronary
AND
Year: 1989-2009
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although actual search strategies have to be varied to accommodate the available search facilities and speciality of the database being search.

- In reality *ration** or even *rationing* as a search term produces too many 'false drops' and so *age based rationing* or *age* - within three words of - *rationing* produced more focussed results where proximity searching was available.
- Although searches like the ones above found much useful general and broad based material, some of the more specialised material could not be found by searches of this type.
- Many useful and relevant articles and other material do not specifically mention ageism or age discrimination but might talk about 'age differences' or 'variations' or other similar phrases which do not lend themselves to searching because of the very large number of 'false drops'.

8. The citation trail

- In this study, more than most, general searching had to be heavily supplemented by following a 'paper trail' of citations from highly relevant material to other cited articles and also to other material by the same author. This process was greatly facilitated by the presence of 'this article has been cited by' (inverse referencing) facilities in the electronic versions of some journals.
- This approach is sometimes referred to as a 'snowball' method of gathering references as located references gather up other related references.

9. The search process

- The database search results were, in some cases filtered in-situ before being transferred to Reference Manager software where further filtering took place. The filtered Reference Manager results were then transferred to a common internal

Cardbox database where duplicate entries were marked. All entries were scanned and rated to identify candidates for a fuller examination. Entries were, at this stage, also identified as being relevant to the primary care study, the secondary care study or both.

- The bibliographies and reference lists were generated from this common database.

10. Database search results

Database	Results and Notes
Search – Filtered – RefMan - Cardbox	
Ageinfo,	221
Ageline,	200
Applied Social Sciences Index and Abstracts (ASSIA)	207
BLEPS Catalogue	26
BMC Journals	24
BMJ	17
Cambridge journals	5
Combined Academic and National Research Library Catalogue (COPAC)	1
Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health (CINAHL)	120
Dissertation Abstracts	2
EconLit	29
ERIC	149
Gerolit	14
HMIC	27
International Bibliography of the Social Sciences (IBSS)	38
ISI Web of Knowledge (Web of Science)	216
Medline/ PubMed	485
NHS EED / DARE	1
Oxford Journals	13

Public Affairs Information Service (PAIS)	118
Social Care Online	148
Social Policy and Practice	48
Social Science Abstracts	112
Westlaw	10
Zetoc	58
Individually located (Google, Google Scholar or by following citations)	366

The review team

- Angela Clark – principal author, primary healthcare and social care reviews
- Nat Lievesley – principal author, secondary healthcare and mental health reviews
- Ruth Hayes – searches and bibliography
- Kate Jones – searches and document delivery
- Gillian Crosby – project director