

FOCUS ON RESEARCH

THE ABERDEEN CHILDREN OF THE NINETEEN FIFTIES COHORT STUDY: DEVELOPING AND MAINTAINING AN IMPORTANT SCOTTISH RESOURCE FOR LIFE-COURSE EPIDEMIOLOGY AND PUBLIC HEALTH RESEARCH

Researchers

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Aim

To provide technical and administrative support to :

1. assess the feasibility of future contacts with this cohort
2. improve the quality, quantity, dissemination and documentation of existing information on the cohort
3. provide data to bona fide investigators.

Project Outline/Methodology

The cohort consists of 12,000 children born in Aberdeen, studied in 1962, and followed up via a postal questionnaire and NHS linkages from 1999.

Heather Clark worked 1-1.5 days a week for 12 months in 2005-2006. She updated information about deaths and hospitalisations among the cohort; added information about brothers and sisters; updated address details via a Christmas card mailing; supplied information to 15 researchers who requested to use the data; sent a postal survey to 200 study participants; explored the possibility of linking study data to a local psychiatric register; set up a new open access website for the study; and acted as secretary to the study's steering group.

Key Results

As at October 2006, 646 of this cohort are known to have died, and we predict that over the next ten years a further 700 will die. Information has been obtained on 36,515 acute hospital and 1203 psychiatric admissions, and 800 cancer registrations in Scotland. 9,485 brothers and sisters who were also born in Aberdeen have been identified and their birth data has been added to information about the participants. We estimate that 6,248 participants are still contactable, of whom 4,799 are still resident in the Grampian Region. 200 questionnaires were sent to a random sample of participants still living in Scotland and with a sibling in the survey: completed questionnaires were returned by 129 (65%), of whom 123 (95%) expressed willingness to attend for a medical examination. 22 papers were

published in 2005 and 2006 or are in press.

Conclusions

The study has great potential as a very detailed Scottish cohort of children and their siblings, all born in one city, who are now in middle age and therefore of particular interest in terms of chronic illnesses and premature deaths. We have found that it is still possible to contact the majority, and that most of those contacted are willing to respond to postal questionnaires and to attend a clinic for medical tests; and that the regular addition of further information on hospitalisations and deaths is feasible.

What does this study add to the field?

This study is the largest Scottish life-course cohort based on a complete population. Its primary use is in furthering our understanding of life-course influences on health. Insights gained are relevant to the public health as they enable one to examine the impact of interventions at various stages of the life-course on future health.

Implications for Practice or Policy

Scotland offers great potential for studies of health over the life-course because of the excellent data available. However such studies require dedicated administrative support if they are to reach their optimal potential.

Where to next?

The project co-ordinator is being re-employed on a mixture of funds for another year, during which she will continue to manage and update the data, and will assist a proposed application for funds to undertake a further postal questionnaire of the whole cohort and a medical examination of a sub sample.

Further details from:

<http://www.abdn.ac.uk/childrenofthe1950s/>

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