



Public priorities for medical research and development

Summary of research findings

Background and objectives

The ABPI commissioned research in order to better understand the public's health concerns and their priorities for clinical research. To this purpose, Opinion Leader was commissioned to carry out a research study, the objectives of which were to identify:

- Which diseases people are most concerned about for themselves and their families
- Whether they think enough research is being undertaken into the major disease threats this country faces
- The public's priority areas for medical research and development

Research methodology

The research programme comprised two stages:

- An omnibus survey with a nationally representative sample of 2014 participants
 - Undertaken from 21-26 November 2007
- A day-long deliberative event with 30 participants from across the UK
 - Held in central London on 10th January 2008
 - Mix of gender, ethnicity, and age reflecting the UK population
 - Participants were recruited from Glasgow, Cardiff, Manchester, Nottingham, Southampton and London.

Headline findings

Public's illness and disease concerns

- The majority of the public, in the national omnibus survey, thought that Cancer was a top priority for national health spending (72% stated Cancer as one of the illnesses and diseases that concerned them the most).
 - Cancer was also the most frequently mentioned illness or disease that should be a priority for finding new treatments (72% mentioned) and that they are worried for their family (55% mentioned) and themselves (48% mentioned).
- Heart Disease and Alzheimer's were the second most commonly mentioned diseases. Figure 1 illustrates the top seven most frequently mentioned illnesses and diseases.

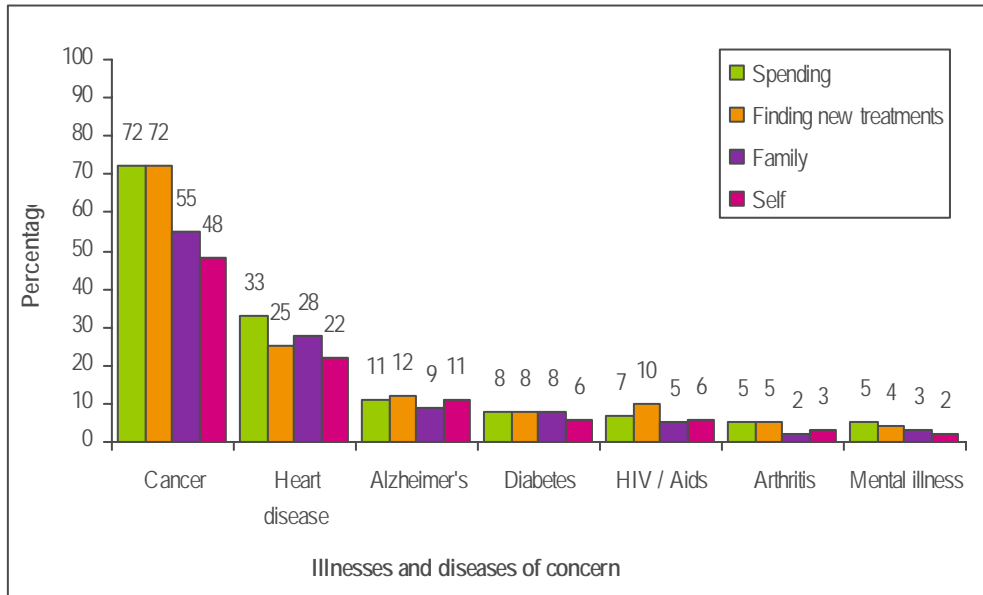
Figure 1. Illnesses and diseases of concern

Q1 'Which, if any, illnesses or diseases do you think should be a priority for national health spending?'

Q2 'Which, if any, illnesses or diseases do you think should be a priority for finding new treatments?'

Q3&4 'Which, if any, illnesses or diseases are you 3) worried about for yourself, 4) worried about for your family in the future?'

Base 2014



- These results show that public concern is broadly in line with NHS Priorities and the research and development pipeline¹
- Findings also mirror a poll by Mori in 2006² where the top seven responses were Cancer, Heart Disease, HIV, Diabetes, Mental Illness, Alzheimer's Disease and Asthma
 - However, Alzheimer's has moved up the list and Arthritis replaced Asthma
- Within the deliberative event, these diseases were also of concern alongside a multitude of other illnesses and diseases. Those of most immediate concern, overall, were diseases that they had some personal connection to i.e. those they had or members of their family had.
- In addition, within the deliberative event, diseases that they perceived could strike at random e.g. MRSA, Cancer etc were more concerning than those they felt they could attempt to control through lifestyle choices e.g. Diabetes, Heart Disease.

Media influences on personal concerns

- Within the deliberative event the public recognised that the media heavily influenced the diseases that were top of mind e.g. MRSA is currently featuring highly whereas Meningitis has fallen off the radar.
- This media influence was perceived to detract attention away from some causes that the public thought were very important e.g. Diabetes, Mental Illness. There was some concern that these diseases suffered reduced focus or funding as a result.

¹ Source: ABPI 2007

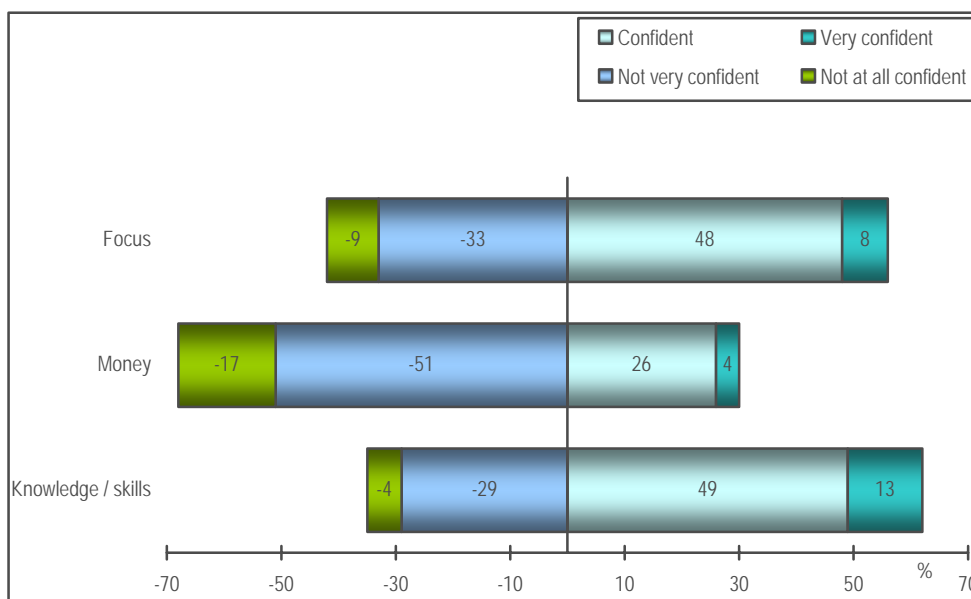
² Source: Ipsos Mori Cancerbackup 2006 <http://www.ipsos-mori.com/polls/2006/cancerbackup.shtml>

Awareness of and confidence in medical research

- The majority of the public within the deliberative event did not know very much about what medical research and development was being undertaken, nor who was responsible for carrying it out.
- They assumed that charities and the Government took a leading role, with charities also a key player. Few spontaneously mentioned the role of the pharmaceutical industry
- Within the omnibus survey (Fig 2), over one half were confident that enough focus and knowledge and skills are invested in research and development for illnesses that they are most concerned about (56% and 62%)
- However, only one third are confident that enough money is invested in research and development for illnesses that they are most concerned about (30%).

Figure 2. Confidence that enough focus, money and knowledge is invested in research and development

Q5 "How confident are you that there is a) enough focus on, b) enough money invested in, c) enough knowledge and skills used in finding new treatments for the illnesses / diseases that worry you the most?" Base: 2014



- Those within the deliberative research reflected that the information that they receive is often conflicting:
 - They receive conflicting medical advice e.g. nutritional, best treatments
 - They see the GP as a declining source of information: "We rely on the news and the internet – this information isn't readily available from the GP"
 - The Internet is acting as a key supplementary resource (but also perhaps raising anxiety)

- When informed through the deliberative process³, the public were gratified to find out that much of the funding was focussed in the diseases that concerned them, and that there were some constructive partnerships working together for solutions
- However they remained surprised at what they considered to be a relatively poor proportion of investment in prevention and the sheer length of time involved in producing results.

Public's priorities for medical research

- The public in the deliberative event were able to engage in a meaningful debate about what they considered to be key factors for consideration when setting priorities for research and development
- Key priority factors included:
 - Helping the greatest number of people
 - Focussing on diseases that most severely affected (or took) people's lives
 - Likely success of the research
 - The cost of the research.

Informing the public about medical research

- No current place for people to find out trusted information about the funding of medical research and its progress in finding new treatments
- Participants suggest that information about should be available for those who do want it
- Such texts should be accessible via the Internet and in libraries and presented in a summary format in plain English.

³ A presentation was given on medical research by Professor Max Parmar from the MRC. Handouts were also distributed about the medical research pipeline and previous research undertaken.