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Development of the standardised patient method to assess quality of cancer care in Nigeria and Kenya

Submission date 13/02/2026	**Recruitment status** No longer recruiting	[_] Prospectively registered [X] Protocol
Registration date 23/02/2026	**Overall study status** Completed	[_] Statistical analysis plan [_] Results
Last Edited 01/09/2026	**Condition category** Cancer	[_] Individual participant data [X] Record updated in last year

Plain English summary of protocol

Background and study aims

This project is part of a larger programme aiming to shorten the time it takes for people with possible cancer symptoms in sub Saharan Africa to get diagnosed and start treatment. The full programme includes several work packages. The section described here (WP3) focuses on developing and testing a new way to measure how well clinical staff recognise and refer people who have cancer.

To do this, the study will use Standardised Patients (SPs). These are trained individuals who visit health facilities acting as real patients. They follow a set script and then report what happened during the consultation. SPs have been used in many countries, including Kenya and Nigeria, to assess the quality of healthcare, and have featured in major international studies.

The SP method will help identify common gaps to be addressed in clinical practice (including asking history questions, making referrals, requesting lab tests, and dispensing or prescribing medicines) for cancer-related conditions in primary care settings. This information will inform the intervention and function as an outcome measure in evaluation of the intervention.

Who can participate?

For this study, individuals are hired as standardised patients and will present as the patient in the clinical cases they are given.

What does the study involve?

Trained Standardised Patients will visit selected health facilities posing as real patients with scripted symptoms that may indicate cancer. They will undergo a consultation and then record what happened, including whether the health worker recognised the potential seriousness of the symptoms and whether an appropriate referral was made.

No real patients are directly involved, and health workers' usual practice will not be disrupted.

What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?

Health workers may indirectly benefit from improved training and support developed from the

findings of this study, which aims to enhance early cancer detection and referral systems.
The primary risk is minimal and relates to the covert nature of the assessment. However, protections are in place, and the study will only proceed after ethical review and approval.

Where is the study run from?
The study is delivered as part of an international research programme focused on improving cancer outcomes in sub-Saharan Africa. It is sponsored by the University of Birmingham and led co-investigators at the African Population and Health Research Center (Kenya), University of Ibadan (Nigeria) and Bayero University (Kano).

When is the study starting and how long is it expected to run for?
June 2025 to August 2025

Who is funding the study?
The study is funded by the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) (UK), which has reviewed the scientific quality of the project.

Who is the main contact?
Jen Knight (Project Manager), j.knight.2@bham.ac.uk

Contact information

Type(s)
Principal investigator, Public, Scientific

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National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR)
158242

Study information

Scientific Title
Development of the standardised patient method to assess quality of cancer care in Nigeria and Kenya

Study objectives
Develop and test a method to evaluate the quality of diagnosis and referral utilising standardised patients. The standardised patient method will help identify common gaps to be

addressed in clinical practice (including asking history questions, making referrals, requesting lab tests, and dispensing or prescribing medicines) for cancer-related conditions in primary care settings.

Ethics approval required
Ethics approval required

Ethics approval(s)
1. Approved 28/01/2025, African Population Health Research Center (APHRC Campus, 2nd Floor, Manga Close, Off Kirawa Road, Nairobi, PO Box 10787-00100, Kenya; +254 (0)720098388; info@aphrc.org), ref: DOR/2024/063

2. Approved 17/03/2025, AMREF Ethics and Scientifc Review Committee (Amref Health Africa in Kenya, Nairobi, Nairobi, PO Box 30125-00100, Kenya; +254 (02)206994000; info.kenya@amref.org), ref: ESRC P1841/2025

3. Approved 14/05/2025, National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (Off Waiyaki Way, Upper Kabete,, Nairobi, PO Box 30623 - 00100, Kenya; +254 (0)204007000; dg@nacosti.go.ke), ref: NACOSTI/P/25/4173261

4. Approved 17/01/2025, Oyo State Ministry of Health Research Ethics Committee (HREC) (Ministry of Health, Department of Planning, Research and Statistics Division, Ibadan, Private Mail Bag No, Nigeria; +234 (0)8038210122; info@oyostate.gov.ng), ref: NHREC/OYOSHRIEC/10/11/22

5. Approved 04/02/2025, University of Ibadan/University College Hospital Ethics Committee (UI/UCH EC) (Institute for Advanced Medical Research and Training (IAMRAT), Ibadan, 200285, Nigeria; +234 (0)8023268431; ikeajayi2003@yahoo.com), ref: NHREC/05/01/2008a

6. Approved 19/12/2024, Bayero University, Kano - Health Research Ethics Committee (BUK-HREC) (Bayero University - Health Research Ethics Committee (BUK-HREC), Kano, P.M.B. 3011, Nigeria; +234 (0)8032349387; provost.chs@buk.edu.ng), ref: NHREC/BUK-HREC/546/10/2311

7. Approved 28/12/2024, Health Research Ethics Committee of Kano State of Nigeria Ministry of Health (Kano State of Nigeria Ministry of Health, 2nds and 3rd Floor, Post Office Road, Kano, P.M.B 3066, Nigeria; +234 (0)8033238779; smoh.kano2019@gmail.com), ref: NHREC/17/03/2018

Primary study design
Observational

Secondary study design
Cross sectional study

Study type(s)

Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied
Non-communicable diseases in primary care

Interventions
We will develop a series of standardised patient cases to describe a patient presentation and to guide responses over five knowledge domains of history taking, clinical examination, differential

diagnosis, treatment/management and next steps.
Following the consultation, the standardised patient will complete a form that forms the basis for assessment over the above five domains; did the clinician ask the appropriate questions, do or offer the correct examination, explain the possible causes clearly, take the correct action in terms of testing or referring and explain what would happen next and why.
Standardised patients will then be recruited and trained following a process with which we are familiar.

Intervention Type
Other

Primary outcome(s)
1. Quality of cancer care in Nigeria and Kenya measured using using a structured checklist at after each unannounced standardised patient visit

Key secondary outcome(s)

Completion date
13/08/2025

Eligibility

Key inclusion criteria
The individuals involved in this study are standardised patients (who aim to pass as a normal patient) and will be recruited based on the characteristics of the case they are presenting. All the standardised patients portraying a particular scenario are meticulously trained and rehearsed to ensure that the clinical presentation as well as the emotional, physical and psychosocial aspects of the patient they represent — speech, body language, dress, reactions to physical examinations — are standardised thus ensuring that each provider, when meeting an SP, will face the same clinical challenge.

Healthy volunteers allowed
Yes

Age group
Adult

Lower age limit
24 Years

Upper age limit
58 Years

Sex
All

Total final enrolment
71

Key exclusion criteria

Individuals who do not pass the training selection process

Date of first enrolment
10/06/2025

Date of final enrolment
13/08/2025

Locations

Countries of recruitment
Kenya

Nigeria

Study participating centre
African Population and Health Research Center
Kenya

Study participating centre
University of Ibadan
Nigeria

Study participating centre
Bayero University
Nigeria

Sponsor information

Organisation
University of Birmingham

ROR
https://ror.org/03angcq70

Funder(s)

Funder type

Funder Name
National Institute for Health and Care Research

Alternative Name(s)
National Institute for Health Research, NIHR Research, NIHRresearch, NIHR - National Institute for Health Research, NIHR (The National Institute for Health and Care Research), NIHR

Funding Body Type
Government organisation

Funding Body Subtype
National government

Location
United Kingdom

Results and Publications

Individual participant data (IPD) sharing plan

IPD sharing plan summary
Not expected to be made available

Study outputs

Output type	Details	Date created	Date added	Peer reviewed?	Patient-facing?
Protocol file		15/04/2025	01/09/2026	No	No