

A summary of recent research about men in surveillance in the NHS Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm Screening Programme

In the UK men aged 65 are screened for Abdominal Aortic Aneurysms (AAA) in the NHS Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm Screening Programme. Men who have an AAA have regular scans to check the size of the AAA (we say they are 'in surveillance' for AAA).

Between 2023 and 2025 men in surveillance, their family members, and staff providing surveillance helped us to do some research in England. This is a summary of what we found and what we are doing with the information.

We wanted to find how best to improve the quality of care and support for men in England who have been diagnosed with an AAA and who are in surveillance (having regular scans to measure the AAA). We wanted to find out:

- Whether having an AAA worried men
- How best to help men manage any worry.
- How men and their families feel about leaving surveillance if their AAA stays small for many years.

1. What research did we do?

To explore how to help men who are worried about having a AAA:

- We sent a survey to 152 NHS staff who provide the screening service to find out how to help men who are worried. 99 answered the survey.
- We sent a survey to 1100 men who were in AAA surveillance. This was to find out how many men were worried. 734 men answered the survey.
- We interviewed 22 men who said they were worried, and 2 family members, to talk about what they thought might help.
- We made an information booklet with men and their families to address men's needs.
- We tested the booklet with 23 men and got feedback about how to make it better

To explore views of whether men should ever leave surveillance:

- We had a workshop with 15 doctors and nurses
- We interviewed 22 men and 5 family members
- We held two workshops with 30 men and 6 family members to explore their preferences

2. What did we find out?

- ✓ Most men were not worried about having a AAA. But some men who had bigger AAAs were worried.
- ✓ NHS staff and men said that men needed more information about having an AAA.
- ✓ Men and their family members helped to make a booklet that covered the things men wanted to know more about.
- ✓ Men found the booklet useful. They would like to receive it at their first scan if they are diagnosed with AAA. Some men said they had not received any written information before. If they had been given written information, they felt it did not cover everything in the booklet.
- ✓ In terms of leaving surveillance, men and their family members wanted the option of staying in surveillance even if their small AAA was not growing. They suggested being scanned every two years rather than every year.

3. How will this research lead to improvements?

We have given the information booklet to the NHS AAA Screening Programme so they can consider the information they offer to men.

We are feeding these findings into a national review of whether men should leave surveillance if their AAA remains small after many years. This means that men's views are considered as part of the review.

4. Making sure this research is helpful to patients

Throughout the research, a Patient and Public Involvement Engagement group made sure our research was helpful to patients. This group of 5 men had had AAA screening or an AAA. They helped to write the letters and questionnaires we used, joined workshops with men to develop the information booklet, and gave us their views of the findings to help us report the key ones.

Professor Alicia O'Cathain
University of Sheffield, September 2025

On behalf of the Patient Centred Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm Study (PCAAAS) team. You can see the members of this team, and the detailed findings of our study, at <https://sheffield.ac.uk/scharr/research/centres/hcru/pcaaas>:

FUNDED BY



This study was funded by the NIHR Health Services and Delivery Research (HS&DR) Programme (NIHR135031). The views expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the NIHR or the Department of Health and Social Care.