The Royal College of Pathologists
Pathology: the science behind the cure

Exploring screening

Screening programmes use a diagnostic test to identify a disease which if detected early enough may be treatable and would prevent further complications later on in life. Screening programmes are often funded by the government to promote public health. Currently a number of screening programmes are run nationally such as screening to identify patients with cystic fibrosis or colorectal cancer. Not every disease can be screened for and so it is important to identify those diseases which are serious public health issues and will be easy to identify using a single diagnostic test. As a result a number of issues need to be considered when thinking about rolling out a screening programme for a specific disease.

Led by scientists involved in screening programmes, students will discuss the controversial issues involved with these initiatives including what makes a good screening test? How do you decide whether a disease should be screened for? What is the impact on the patient if you get the right or wrong result? How does screening impact on the NHS?

Resources and refreshments will be provided.

National Curriculum Links

KS4 Science
KS4 History
KS4 Citizenship

Key Words

Diagnosis
Diagnostic tests
Screening programmes
Making decisions about public health
Wider reaching implications of screening

Curriculum practical skills
Students will:

- Take part in group activities that will develop teamwork and communication skills
- Think critically and rationally through different challenges
- Take part confidently in discussions with others about issues involving science and medicine.

Life skills
Students will:

- Be creative. Use imaginative and empathetic thinking to understand other people's motives and experiences. (i.e. Why some people may feel differently about national screening than others)
- Develop sensitivity. Encourage understanding and respect for people with different values and opinions. (i.e. A range of views exist on the topic of national screening, why might some people decide not to take part in a programme?)

- Develop critical awareness. Stimulate debate on difficult issues. (I.e. The suggestion that there should be a universal childhood screening programme for FH is highly controversial)
- Develop independent learning. Activities that encourage students to ask their own questions. (i.e. group discussions will explore different viewpoints)
- Link science to issues relevant to students' own lives. Developing an understanding of health issues related to students' life experiences. (i.e. Pathology is involved in almost every medical test, from cervical smear tests to blood tests.).