

Acorn Surgery  
Patient Participation Report  
March 2013

In 2011 the Practice set up a Patient Reference Group (PRG) - a group of patients who were asked to let us know of any areas of particular interest, concern or priority to them with regard to the Surgery and its services, and to identify anything that they would particularly like to be kept informed or consulted about.

We looked at our 'patient demographic' - the way our patient list is made up by age/sex/ethnic group etc. and used a variety of ways to invite a broad range patients to join the group including:-

- individual letters to some patients
- information posted on the Practice website
- information flyers in the surgery
- posters on the notice boards and on the advertising screens in the waiting areas
- messages on repeat prescription slips
- invitation by email
- information slips attached to appointment cards and letters
- information at registration
- being asked personally by clinicians and reception staff.

The response was limited but numbers have continued to slowly increase. This is welcomed as we are keen to make sure that everyone has a say (if they want to) and for the PRG to be representative of our whole Practice population - so we want young people, parents, employed and not employed, older patients, those from different ethnic groups and patients with a range of different medical conditions so that we can make sure, as far as possible, that we provide the best service for everyone.

We looked at a range of different priority areas with the Group, agreeing on one main priority of addressing the very high DNA rate we experience at the Practice - that is the number of patients who don't turn up for the appointments they have made. These are known as DNAs or 'did not attend'. Month on month hundreds of appointments are wasted because patients don't turn up and don't cancel the appointment so that it can be offered to another patient. The vast majority of these patients then need to make another appointment as they missed their original one. This demand on appointments causes huge strain on the system and that is why patients sometimes have difficulty making an appointment with the doctor or nurse of their choice, or on the day or time they want to.

In order to 'get to the bottom of it' and try to work out why so many people miss their appointments, we carried out a survey of patients to see if there was anything particular in the system that contributed to the problem. We shared the outcomes of the survey with the PRG and they used this to look at the DNA information we gave them - this was the number of missed appointments each month and the particular clinician these related to. We continue to report the DNA statistics to the patient group each month to try to identify trends and to address particular reasons why patients don't turn up. *(Please be reassured that no patient-specific information is shared with members of the Patient Group.)*

Together we agreed a set of actions via a detailed plan to make some changes to the way that we manage the DNAs in the surgery. One of the things we actioned is setting up SMS text appointment confirmation and reminder system. The reception team contact DNA patients by telephone to check the reasons for not attending and to see if there are any factors in our current systems that need to be addressed in response. One of the issues the patient group passed to surgery staff is that patients may not cancel because of the time they have to wait for the telephone to be answered if their call is in a queue; for this reason, the Practice installed a dedicated Appointment Cancellation Line with a dedicated

number that goes direct to a messaging service with no queuing involved; this has proved fairly successful and we continue to monitor its usefulness. We now include the cancellation line number on all appointment cards and on the text messaging service.

As the year progressed, further priorities were worked on by the Practice and its Patient Groups, including sharing of statistical information on A&E usage; many patients use this service inappropriately when they should consult their GP surgery and is a priority area for the Government to tackle, to ensure that NHS funds are used appropriately by patients using the right service for their needs. This is an area of work which the PPG and Surgery continue to collaborate on as 'work in progress'.

The PPG renamed itself during the latter part of 2012 and is now known as the Acorn Patient Team – and continue to be a hugely strong resource for the Practice, offering support with meeting Care Quality Commission standards, reviewing protocols and processes to make sure that we are providing the appropriate level of service for patients and our documents are written in clear language, etc.

Fundraising continued with gusto during 2012/13 and the PPG was presented with a specifically designed and built bookcase by the Luminus Group; sales of secondhand, good quality books continues to be one of the main fund raising streams for the Group and they have asked the Practice to identify any equipment that could be purchased by the PPG for the benefit of patients. In the early part of 2012, the Group bought a fantastic wooden toy for the Children's Area of the Surgery waiting area.

As a Practice, we feel incredibly fortunate to have such dedicated Patient Groups who support our work and do an excellent job in being our 'critical friend'.

To ensure that all patients are aware, the following information is displayed in the surgery, in the patient information leaflet and on our website:-

*The Surgery opening hours are confirmed as Monday, Wednesday, Friday 8 am - 6 pm; Tuesday 7.30 am - 6pm; Thursday 8 am - 8 pm. The Reception desk is closed 1-2pm but patients are able to securely leave repeat prescription requests and other communications during this time and can access the surgery via telephone.*

Patients can pre-book appointments with a health care assistant or GP from 7.30 a.m. on Tuesdays; prebookable appointments are also available with a nurse or GP on Thursday evenings up to 8pm.

End of Report
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