

PPG REPORT: Penshurst Gardens Surgery 2013/14

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Introduction: The Patient Survey Questionnaire was developed using standardised questions from the GMC patient questionnaire and GP Patient Survey. The draft questionnaire needed very minor amendments resulting in a final version that received overwhelming approval by the partners and the PPG (patient participation group).

Aims: The aim of the patient survey is to identify the important issues impacting on our patients overall experience and satisfaction with the practice. It is hoped that this snapshot would provide some meaningful data that would help PPG develop an achievable action plan for improving services.

Methods: Patients attending the surgery during the first week of March 2014 were asked to complete and hand in their questionnaires at reception after their appointment. A total of 96 patients were sampled in this way. Questionnaires were distributed randomly and widely to cover sessions provided by the nurses and doctors (GP partners, salaried GP, Registrar and ST4 doctor).

Analysis: Numerical data were entered by the Deputy Practice Manager into an Excel spreadsheet and displayed in tables, graphs and pictograms. Patient comments (qualitative data) were analysed and sorted into emerging themes by the lead GP partner and the GP Registrar. 2/3 of respondents completed the whole questionnaire including the patient comments section of the questionnaire; 1/3 of patients did not have any comments to add and left the comments section blank.

Results: See Excel spreadsheet for the detailed results

The results were presented to the PPG at the bimonthly meeting on March 10th 2014.

The main highlights were:-

1. A resounding number (**90% or more** of the respondents) rated their experience good or very good in the majority domains surveyed including making appointments, waiting times, seeing their practitioner, and the wider practice issues.
2. A surprising **94%** in the survey found the receptionists helpful in accessing GP services.
3. An impressive **95%** of respondents said they would recommend the practice to a friend.
4. A woeful **46%** found it difficult to get through on the phone.

Conclusions:

The PPG were surprised by the very positive ratings, in particular the recurring hot-button issue of the receptionists.

The PPG agreed that there is still a lot of work to be done in managing the ever increasing demand for appointments and improving telephone access.

ACTION PLAN:

Recurring themes emerging from patient comments with suggested solutions formed the skeleton of the improvement plan approved at the PPG meeting.

1. **Telephone access.** Many patients find it difficult to get through in the mornings to book on the day appointments and by the time they get through available appointments have gone. ***A telephone queuing system or having more receptionists to answer the phones at busy times were suggested as possible solutions.*** A telephone queuing system would be ideal but previous quotes for upgrading the telephone service have been unaffordable to the practice and it would be unfair to expect patients to bear the cost of their calls. Having more reception staff seemed more acceptable to the PPG because it was deemed a better experience to have a real person at the end of the phone line than a call waiting or queuing message. The partners will have to decide whether employing more receptionists is a financially viable option.

2. **Appointments.** The PPG agreed that ***patient education is a top priority.*** Patients should be educated not to make on the day appointments for chronic problems in order to free appointment slots for patients with more acute problems. This could be publicised as a repetitive on-screen message in the waiting room. It was also suggested that ***the appointment window period could be also extended from 4 weeks to 8 weeks for pre-booked (routine) appointments*** in order to reduce demand and enable patients to plan their routine appointments with their regular GP. This recommendation will be put forward to the partners for their approval. The PPG also awaits preliminary results from the new ***nurse/doctor telephone triage system*** which started in March this year.

3. **Receptionists.** The PPG acknowledged a significant improvement in the 'receptionist-patient' relationship which may be a reflection of improved communication and people skills imbued at ***monthly customer service training sessions*** and the introduction of ***new male staff members at reception.*** The positive manner in which some of our patients have responded to the new male receptionists at the desk should inform further study into the impact of having male receptionists at the desk. Finally, the survey question of how helpful patients found the receptionists at the surgery might have been answered differently if patients had completed the form before getting their appointment. Therefore the PPG suggested that the question should be amended in the future to ***survey the patient experience making routine versus urgent appointments to see if there is a different response/outcome.***

Overall Reflection:

The results of the survey are surprising in that patients are now much happier with the service provided by the receptionists. This is a major turnaround since the birth of the PPG in the last year and the introduction of regular customer service receptionist training and new male receptionists.

The next hurdle for the PPG is tackling the problem of telephone access. Funding remains the main obstacle, perhaps ***Barnet CCG should take note and consider long-term investment and new funding for more receptionists and/or a telephone queuing service for all practices CCG-wide.***