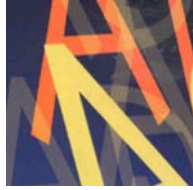


Handy Tips on...



Pre-booked Telephone Consultations

Some practices have found that telephone consultations can be a useful way of providing an alternative point of access for patients. Telephone consultations can be more convenient for both patients and the practice.

1. Trial the system first using just one GP, for a short time period and test the change! What effect did the test have? Did the telephone consultations save time? Were patients satisfied with the service? Think about how telephone consultations could be “rolled out” across the practice.
2. Use a simple protocol for all team members to follow when offering telephone consultations. Some practices have found it useful to provide different “scripts” for reception staff, nurses and GPs to follow when offering telephone consultations to patients. It may be useful to train receptionists to develop their confidence in using the script.
3. Advertise the service. You can inform patients of a “new” telephone service through the Practice Leaflet, Handouts left on Reception and given out in consultations, Posters in reception or articles in Newsletters. It may be worth “re-launching” a telephone consultation service as a ‘new’ and ‘tailor made’ service for patients.

4. Telephone consultations are not appropriate for all types of consultations. You may wish to start with requests for home visits and same day appointments. Other types of consultations which could be offered include: Condition Reviews, Medication Reviews, Advice, Medical Certificates, Results, Follow Ups or administration.
5. Double check you have the correct telephone number and ring on time. Telephone numbers can be taken at the time the telephone appointment is made so that people can be called on mobile phones or at work when appropriate. Alternatively patients can be asked to call the practice at a set time.
6. Ensure confidentiality; confirm whom you are speaking to, don't leave messages on answer machines.
7. Record the consultation in the clinical records.
8. Both patient and clinician should feel comfortable about the telephone consultation. You may find it useful to monitor the number of telephone appointments that result in a face to face consultation.

With thanks to:
Sunnybank Medical Centre, Bradford.
Pat Hart, Marple Cottage Surgery, Stockport

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