

OVERVIEW OF THE APPOINTMENTS' SYSTEM 2014 - 2015

Our patient numbers have increased and the demand for appointments has continued to rise, especially with patients who wish to see a clinician on the day. This is a problem that is nationwide and not only is unsustainable for a single practice but has put undue pressure on the doctors and nurses and support staff.

It has necessitated practices looking for solutions within the locality and co-working or collaborating with other practices.

So, this year we have looked at other models to try and accommodate the on the day requests from patients. Our daily requests for appointments range from 35 – 102 and this does not account for the patients who are now booking on line. Of this figure over 60% want an appointment that day. The appointments we have available on the day are for urgent cases, but identifying these is a difficult process and it often means these slots are being used by patients who could have gone to a pharmacist for advice or they could have had a telephone consultation slot or they could have booked a routine appointment.

As GP practices are not emergency services there is no provision for this kind of care and so our staff are often having to signpost patients to the most appropriate service which may not be the practice.

DEVELOPMENTS

1 New Pilot Scheme for morning visits using Paramedics.

We announced in the practice and to the PLG that we were taking part in pilot scheme with the 4 other local practices to provide different cover for visits so that patients who needed to be admitted to hospital could be seen in the morning instead of later in the day. This would mean that patients could have immediate attention from the Emergency Clinical Practitioner (ECP) and could either have their concerns resolved or could be admitted to hospital in time for their stay to be less than 24 hours if possible. This pilot scheme is funded separately by NHS England and has enabled the employment of paramedics.

2 Appointments Bookable on Line.

Once our clinical system was activated to allow bookings on line, we opened up a large number of appointments.

3 Minor Illness clinics.

Minor illness clinics have been set up to try and reduce the pressure on the Duty Doctor and these are run by the Senior Practice Nurses or the ECP.

ST JAMES SURGERY

2014 - 2015

4 Doctor Triage.

After considerable discussion it was decided to continue with doctor Triage as it provides the very highest patient care.

5 Telephone consultation slots.

The practice has provided telephone consultation slots for over two years now but it was decided this year to increase the number of slots that are available on a daily basis. These slots are specifically for patients who have already visited the doctor and would like advice for an on-going condition. The doctor then can decide if a visit to the practice is also advisable.

6 Extended opening and consultation times.

The practice is open for phone calls from 8:00 am – 6:30 pm every week day. A GP is on site throughout from 8:30 am – 6:30pm and often they will start calls from this time. There has been the provision of appointments to 7:30 pm and 7:45 pm for a while now but these slots are often DNA'd and of course cannot be held open for working patients.

PATIENTS WHO DO NOT ATTEND

On an average, 124 patients each month do not attend the appointment they have made. There is no consistent reason for this from the research we have done.

In November 124 appointments were lost - the equivalent of 8 full consultation sessions of a doctor or 4 days' worth slots. We would have no problem with demand if these patients cancelled their appointments.

These are some of the reasons we have received from calling patients who DNA:-

- I just forgot
- You did not remind me
- I was better
- I had no transport

Some patients have even DNA'd appointments they are offered the same day.

This is a nationwide problem and well discussed at our last open meeting.

In the on line survey we undertook, the overwhelming number of patients suggested that patients who DNA'd should be fined or sent a letter. The latter option was adopted.

CONCLUSIONS

St James Surgery has taken into account the voice of its patients and their requests for an improved appointments' system.

ST JAMES SURGERY

2014 - 2015

The changes that have been made over the last three years have improved the patient journey through the practice and St James Surgery has maintained the very high level of care and standards expected by the patients.

The demands and expectations of the patient are often driven by the news and government announcements about the NHS. St James has responded to these demands in a methodical and concerned way and we feel that the practice has achieved the most appropriate appointments' system for its patients as is practicable.