

Developing Our Digital Strategy

Patient Questionnaire

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Introduction

“Virtually every aspect of modern life has been, and will continue to be, radically reshaped by innovation and technology and healthcare is no exception” (The NHS Long Term Plan, 2019).

The way in which healthcare is accessed is changing with increased services providing an alternative option to face to face appointments, including: telephone appointments, video appointments, access to healthcare information online and patient portals. The move towards using technology to access and deliver healthcare has certainly leaped forward during the COVID-19 pandemic and there are thought to be benefits to this for patients, including providing increased patient convenience.

We are currently developing our Digital Strategy which will outline our technology ambitions for the next five years. To help us shape our future healthcare services, we asked our patients to tell us about their experiences in accessing healthcare services using technology and how we can best support them to do so in the future (patient questionnaire appendix 1).

Aims and Objectives

A patient questionnaire was developed to enable patients to provide feedback in regards to their experiences in accessing healthcare services using technology, including: advising us which digitally enabled healthcare services they have accessed in the past, perceived advantages and disadvantages experienced, which digitally enabled healthcare services they would you like to be able to access in the future and how we can support them to access digitally enabled healthcare services.

The aim of the questionnaire was to gain a patient perspective in identifying ways in which we can support our patients to access healthcare services using technology.

Sample

The patient questionnaire was sent out via the patient portal to two select cohorts of patients; colorectal and urology. This was because we knew these patient cohorts had existing experience in accessing healthcare services using technology and could provide insight into how we could improve their experience and support future patients to use digitally enabled healthcare services.

Methodology

Below are the steps taken to gain patient feedback:

1. A patient questionnaire was developed by our Strategy and Business Planning Manager and Interim Head of Clinical Applications
2. As the patient sample cohorts are Surgical patients, the patient questionnaire was approved by the Surgical Triumvirate and at Divisional Quality Board
3. Our communications team then developed the questionnaire using survey monkey as a platform to reach our patients
4. The survey monkey electronic link was sent out to our patients via the patient portal
5. The questionnaire remained live for two weeks before closing
6. Once the questionnaire closed the data was collected and collated using Microsoft Excel (data attached appendix 2)
7. Patient feedback was used to inform our Digital Strategy

Results

A total of 52 patients were sent the survey monkey questionnaire link via patient portal with a return rate of 42%.

Of the sample group 70% were aged over 60 and 30% were 46-60 years of age.

77.27% of patients reported that they have previously utilised our patient portal, 63.64% of patients have accessed online healthcare information and advice, 63.46% of patients have utilised telephone appointment services, 13.64% of patients have utilised video appointments. 2 patients also provided comments to inform us that they have attended an online workshop and received correspondence via email and text message.

35% of patients confirmed they were given the option of a face to face appointment if they preferred, 50% of patients reported they were not given the option of a face to face appointment and 15% of patients reported the question not to be applicable to them. 4 patients also provided the following comments:

1. A phone call was all that was needed and I was very happy with that
2. But I didn't ask for one either
3. Discussed over the telephone due to COVID pandemic
4. Telephone appointments okay, sometimes frightened I may miss something

The following comments were provided by our patients to advise us of the advantages they perceived when accessing digitally enabled healthcare services:

1. Don't really see any advantages, would prefer to still have regular appointments when I can see someone
2. Travel
3. Saves time and resources for everyone

4. No travel
5. No travel
6. Quick and easy
7. No travelling to the hospital, minimal effect on my day to day life
8. On time - no need to travel to hospital - no need to find parking space - quick result from blood test
9. It saves travelling and gets information and advice quicker
10. Did not need to travel. Reduces potential infection from people in hospital
11. No need to visit GP practice so potentially safer; flexible and trackable
12. Saved a one hour round trip to the hospital
13. Due to Covid safer at home. No travel involved
14. A positive way of support and very accessible
15. Always get the information required
16. Saves going out
17. I have access to reports, and test results retrospectively
18. It's great that all the relevant information regarding appointments, test results and ongoing health report is available via the portal. Also the video conference workshop via Microsoft teams was very useful -especially as we couldn't meet face to face.
19. Results and information available on line instantly
20. Save time and inconvenience rather than travel to the hospital
21. Speed

The following comments were provided by our patients to advise us of the disadvantages they perceived when accessing digitally enabled healthcare services:

1. I think maybe sometimes you feel more assured when you are with the health professionals face to face
2. lack of personal interaction but not really necessary in my situation
3. Nothing significant
4. Yes if one part of the NHS can't see all the information that another part holds
5. The group meeting would of clearly been better in person as you can casually chat about your experience with others in the same situation, which wasn't as easy over teams as it was more structured
6. Not in my own personal circumstances thus far
7. Not for me. Can be difficult for some of my age
8. Sometimes can't access services
9. No, as long as Macmillan nurse support available, just a phone call away if required.

77.27% of patients reported they would like to be able to access the patient portal in the future, 72.73% of patients would like to be able to access online healthcare information and advice, 50% of patients would like to have access to telephone appointments and 40.91% would like to have access to video appointments in the future. 1 patient does not wish to access healthcare services using technology in the future and 1 patient also said they would like to receive correspondence via email and text message.

55.56% of patients advised they would find online information detailing how to use digitally enabled healthcare services of benefit, 44.44% of patients would find online

videos the best way to support them in accessing healthcare services using technology and 33.33% would like to receive information leaflets within the hospital setting to signpost them to available support. The following 2 comments were also provided by patients:

1. Give us the option of face to face appointments
2. Promote within GP surgeries, any online adverts will only attract those who are already digitally savvy, needs to be part of a total review of service provision as so many new ways of delivering services have emerged over last year

Discussion

The results are split into three key areas: previous experiences in accessing healthcare services using technology, the ways in which the patients wish to access healthcare services in the future using technology and how we can best support them to do so.

Previous Patient Experiences

Patient age was asked to determine whether there is a correlation between age and level of support required when accessing healthcare services using technology. It is acknowledged that due to a small sample size and target cohort a correlation was undetermined, due to 70% of patients being over the age of 60. However, age does not seem to have impacted the sample groups' ability to access healthcare services using technology, with 77.27% of patients reporting that they have previously used patient portal and 63.64% of patients having had appointments via the telephone. Only 13.64% of patients have had video appointments. However, this may be due to the fact that video consultations are currently being rolled out across the organisation and thus video appointments may not have been a previous option available to the patients.

Only 35% of patients reported being given the option of a face to face appointment if they had preferred. It is worth noting the impact of COVID-19 pandemic upon healthcare service provision over the past 12 months and the need to find different ways of working.

The patients reported clear advantages to accessing healthcare services using technology in terms of convenience provided with reduced travel and impact upon their day. Another clear perceived advantage that came through was in regards to patient portal and the ability for patients to have access to their medical records and results. The disadvantages perceived by patients related to a lack of personal contact and the reassurance that comes with face to face interaction. A key recommendation should be that patients are given the opportunity to opt out of accessing healthcare using technology and given the choice of a face to face appointment if preferred or deemed more clinically appropriate by their clinician.

Accessing Healthcare Services using Technology in the Future

A high percentage of patients reported they wished to be able to access patient portal and online healthcare information in the future, 77.27% and 72.73% respectively. Interestingly 40.91% of patients reported they would like to be able to access video appointments in future compared to the 13.64% of patients who had previously accessed healthcare services via video appointment. This indicates a clear area for development within our organisation to benefit our patients and could also support in resolving the disadvantages reported when accessing healthcare service using technology associated with a sense of reduced interaction.

How Can we Support Our Patients

Online information and videos detailing how to use digitally enabled healthcare services would be a clear way to support our patients as indicated by our patients, 55.56% and 44.44% respectively. Interestingly 33.33% of patients reported they would prefer support in the form of leaflet provided in the hospital setting which potentially is explained by a comment provided; *“promote within GP surgeries, any online adverts will only attract those who are already digitally savvy, needs to be part of a total review of service provision as so many new ways of delivering services have emerged over last year”*. The patient is indicating that support and education is required prior to needing to access healthcare service using technology. A recommendation should be that during every patient contact we are advising patients about digitally enabled services available and signposting them to available support and registration. However, our staff firstly require education to ensure they know what services are available within our organisation and across Wirral. It is also noted that at this current time technology is used within pockets of our organisation and part of this Digital Strategy is to firstly roll out innovations.

Conclusion

The patient questionnaire results have confirmed that patients find accessing healthcare services using technology convenient but our patients should be given the choice to opt out and offered a face to face if they prefer or if it is more clinically appropriate. Further work is required to roll out technology innovations across our organisation to benefit our patients as there was a clear interest from our patients in accessing video appointments in the future. Our staff and patients require education to support our patients in using our digitally enabled healthcare services.

Recommendations

1. Digital innovations are rolled out across the organisation to provide maximum benefits for our patients; video consultations
2. Staff are educated in regards to: how patients can access healthcare services using technology, how to access support and registration
3. A range of patient digital support material is created using online information and videos

APPENDIX 1: Patient Questionnaire

1. Age range

- 20 and under
- 30-45
- 45-60
- 60 and over

2. The following are all examples of digitally enabled healthcare services, please indicate which of them you have used?

- Online healthcare information and advice
- Telephone appointment
- Video appointment
- Patient portal
- None
- Other (please detail).....

3. Were you given the option of a face to face appointment if you preferred?

- Yes
- No
- N/A
- Comments.....

4. What were the advantages for you in accessing these digitally enabled healthcare services?

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5. Do you feel there were any disadvantages in accessing digitally enabled healthcare services?

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6. Which digitally enabled healthcare services would you like to access in the future?

Online healthcare information and advice

Telephone appointment

Video appointment

Patient portal

None

Other (please detail).....

7. How can we support you to access digitally enabled healthcare services?

Provide online information detailing how to use digital healthcare services

Provide online videos detailing how to use digital healthcare services

Provide information leaflets in our hospital settings

Other.....

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Thank you

APPENDIX 2: Data results



Developing our
Digital Strategy full re