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WE8.9 Do Telephone Clinics Lead to Greater Patient Satisfaction in General Surgical Outpatients?

Angus McCance, Ellen Ainger, Rebecca Black, Roland Fernandes
East Kent Hospitals University NHS Foundation Trust

Aims: To limit exposure risk in view of the current COVID-19 pandemic, telephone clinics have become the mainstay of outpatient assessment. Although there is data from primary care, there is little evidence for the suitability of telemedicine within General Surgery. The lack of clinical examination can be dissatisfying for both patient and surgeon. The aim of this study was to explore patient satisfaction from telephone clinics in a General Surgery setting.

Methods: Data was collected prospectively from general surgery clinic appointments by a single surgeon in a District General Hospital from September 2021. Demographic data was obtained in addition to a short questionnaire at the end of their consultation. Patients were asked to score their experience out of 5 (5 being most favourable) and their preference in comparison to face to face appointments.

Results: 156 patients were included in the study, of which 95% of patients were contactable. 98% of patients gave the experience a satisfaction score of 3 or more out of 5. The median satisfaction score was 5. 97% expressed a preference over a Face-to-Face appointment. 7% of patients required a further Face-to-Face consultation and this group were more likely to have a lower patient satisfaction score.

Conclusion: Telephone clinics within general surgery achieve excellent satisfaction for the majority of patients. The patient experience could be further optimised by careful selection of patient suitability for the service. The data provides supportive evidence to the NHS Long Term Plan to reduce Face-to-Face outpatient appointments by one third before 2024.