What matters to patients in general practice, for satisfaction and support of change?

A study of 1328 patient responses from 15 practices. The survey was by telephone to patients who had recently (mostly same day) spoken to and/or seen a GP.

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January 2013
Faster response is linked with higher satisfaction. Area of bubble represents number of responses.

Patients polled shortly after receiving a call from a GP.
15 practices, n=1328 responses
Speaking to the usual GP is linked with higher satisfaction. Area of bubble represents number of responses.

73% of very satisfied patients had spoken to their usual GP.

Only 38% of very unsatisfied patients had spoken to their usual GP.

Patients polled shortly after receiving a call from a GP.
15 practices, n=1328 responses total, 441 excluded, no preference for usual GP.
All 15 practices have recently launched the GP Access system, where a GP phone call is the first response.
Patients’ view of the new system is clearly influenced by the experience of response time, as perceived by them.

Patients saying it is better have waited an average 43 mins.

Patients saying it is worse waited an average 60 mins.

Patients polled shortly after receiving a call from a GP.
15 practices, n=1328 responses.
Being called by my own or usual GP also makes an important difference to patients’ approval of the new system.

Patients polled shortly after receiving a call from a GP. 15 practices, n=1328 responses total, 441 excluded, no preference for usual GP.
Speed + Continuity >>>> Satisfaction

• Speed:
  – Patients don’t call in to ask again for a call, saving time and stress on reception
  – GPs feel more in control of the workload
  – Less time is wasted on failed callbacks
  – GP satisfaction is higher

• Continuity
  – GP job satisfaction is higher through familiarity with the patient and history
  – Patients are less likely to call again, reducing demand and workload
  – Evidence links higher continuity with lower referrals (Baker et al 2012)
Is there a trade-off between speed and continuity?

- The intervention has resulted in much faster access, typically 80% reduction in days waiting to see a GP, and over 80% being seen same day.
- Response time by a GP to the initial call is typically in a median under 60 minutes, and as low as 15.
- Continuity, statistically measured (UPC usual provider continuity) has risen in most at the same time, by 7-24%, though in the fastest it fell 6%.
- Suggests that if there is a trade-off, it is at a much faster response speed than traditional models allow, measured in minutes.
- In general, taking the lid off restrictions to access has allowed continuity to improve at the same time.
Note on method

- Responses were collected by practice staff April 2012 – Jan 2013 using GP Access Datalog, and recorded in real time.
- The majority were done by telephone interview, a small number on paper.
- The questionnaire and script are pictured right.

**Patient Survey - after the change.** "I'm calling from your surgery, as I understand the doctor called you today. May I ask a couple of questions to help us improve our service?"

- **How soon did the doctor call?** (NB MINUTES not hours)
- **Was it your usual doctor?** Usual doctor?*
  - Yes
  - No
  - I don't mind
- **What will happen after the doctor's call?** Outcome*
  - Completed
  - See doctor
  - See nurse
  - Home visit
- **How satisfied are you with the service today?** Satisfaction*
  - 5 Very Satisfied
  - 4 Satisfied
  - 3 Neutral
  - 2 Unsatisfied
  - 1 Very Unsatisfied

- **We have recently changed our system, so the doctors call you and then make appointments if needed. Is the new system**
- **Change***
  - Better
  - Same
  - Worse

- **Comment**
- **Age** Copy from clinical system
- **Sex** Male Female Copy from clinical system
We help practices make the change

- 60+ diverse practices
- 500,000 patients
- 230 years experience
- 6 million patient calls
- Growing research base
- Vision: “To transform access to medical care.”
- The launch programme takes 8-12 weeks

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