



4 Develop the team

Clinical Buddies

Clinical 'buddies', AT Medics practices, London

GPs doing phone consultations work alongside a specially trained member of the clerical team, who releases GP time by performing administrative tasks before and after the consultation, as well as connecting the patient to preventive and support services.

The idea

Patients requesting a same day consultation, who do not require continuity of care, and have no red flags are booked a phone consultation. This is part of our 'Frontline approach' - getting GP's to patients earlier in the pathway to enable patients to gain rapid access to clinical support. It has improved efficiency and morale.

Many of the GPs from across this group of 21 practices take turns to do phone consultation sessions. These sessions are housed in a number of hubs within practice premises, with dual screen computers, headsets and access to the full GP team as well as .

During telephone consults, each GP sits alongside a "buddy". This is a specially trained member of the administrative team, who acts as an assistant to the GP. They are the first point of contact in a telephone consultation. They prepare for the full clinical consultation by obtaining details of the patients need, ensuring both the patient and the GP are better prepared to have a productive consultation.

They undertake opportunistic screening and signposting, for example reminding patients about upcoming immunisations and due investigations, or informing them about services in the community relevant to their situation. After the consultation with the GP, they perform administrative tasks such as arranging investigations and follow-up, or ensuring the patient is fully aware of the next steps for their plan.

Impact

Working this way has enabled practices to improve their responsiveness to same day demand. Face-to-face consultations with GPs are reserved for those problems which need a physical examination, more in-depth input for personal continuity of care, or those who at clinical triage were felt to require a face to face review. The use of multidisciplinary pairs of staff in the frontline teams increases uptake of preventive care, allows the GP to work at 'top of licence', and is ensuring patients are aware of and can access with sources of care and support in the community.

Implementation tips

A standard programme of training is used to enable clerical staff to work as buddies. There are also policies, and process maps which ensure that staff are working to a common standard.

This is accompanied by system of continuous audit and improvement, through the use of team debrief after each session, a shared issues and lessons board and continual learning shared between each GP and their buddy.

Link(s)

atmedics.com/