Results of Highview Medical Centre Focus Groups

Qualitative Research Sessions held September 2011
Purpose of Research

- The groups were held as part of the ongoing patient research work being undertaken by Highview Medical Centre.
- Focus groups were held to gauge patient satisfaction with;
  - Current service provision
  - Out of Hours Service
  - Future developments
  - Overall experience of the practice
- Decision was taken to structure groups so they reflected shared experiences.
Focus Group Format

- Groups were held on site.
- Each lasted a maximum of 1 hour.
- Maximum of 8 people per group.
- Groups:
  - Patients with COPD
  - Patients with Diabetes
  - Patients with Mental Health Issues
  - Commuters
  - Mixed Group
  - Newly registered patients
Issues Covered

- All groups had a similar format (with some minor variations) which covered the following key areas;
  - Complaints or concerns with current services.
  - Use of Out of Hours service
  - Discussion on move to new site
  - Opportunity to highlight positive experiences as patients
Results of focus groups – (1)

Complaints and concerns

- Notes of each group are supplied to give a more detailed indication of the issues experienced by each individual groups.
- Common themes included;
  - Booking appointments
  - Repeat Prescriptions
Results of focus groups – (1)
Complaints and concerns

Booking Appointments

- It was the only area of concern mentioned universally by all groups.
- Major concern was around continuity of care.
- This was expressed most strongly by the ‘commuter group. None of whom had long term conditions.
- Patients with long term conditions such as COPD and diabetes said the same thing.
- The balance between ‘on the day’ and ‘pre-bookable appointments’ was felt to be poor. But no group was able to suggest a preferable balance.
Results of focus groups – (1)
Complaints and concerns

Booking Appointments - Verbatim comments

“If you have been coming as long and as often as I have, you just want to see the same doctor, I can’t be bothered to sit there and explain all my conditions and medications to someone who doesn’t know me”

“If I get offered an appointment with a doctor I don’t know, or doesn’t know me, I won’t take the appointment, and that is happening more and more now”

“I like to see the same doctor, which means I do have to wait. I have tried the automated system and I picked the doctor I wanted to see, but it said the next appointment was two weeks away”
Results of focus groups – (1)

Complaints and concerns

Repeat Prescriptions

• This issue was mentioned by 2 groups;
  ➢ COPD
  ➢ Mental Health Patients

• The process was felt to be too complicated, with little or no explanation of changes made to the prescription.
• Most patients in these groups said they would prefer to organise repeat prescriptions over the phone.
Results of focus groups – (1)
Complaints and concerns

Repeat Prescriptions – Verbatim comments

“The onus is always on us to highlight any mistakes or missing medication”

“Sometimes, new medicines don’t seem to get added to repeat prescriptions. You should explain changes or missing things on the bottom of the sheet”

“Repeat Prescriptions, they are fine for the younger generation, but when it comes to an 80 year old, asking them to put in the post instead of phone, they can’t remember what they need”
Results of focus groups – (2) Out of Hours Service

- The responses of the groups were mixed.
- Relatively few had actually used the service.
- Most who had used it, reported good experiences and felt it met their needs.
- The Diabetes patients were the only group to universally prefer A&E, as it was felt to be the safer option. The 24 hour availability of drugs was also a key factor for this group.
- Many people said their natural instinct would be to use A&E.
- Communication of the uses and benefits of the Out of Hours Service is crucial to ensure increased usage.
Results of focus groups – (2) Out of Hours Service

Verbatim comments

“I was very ill at a weekend and a locum doctor came out and was brilliant, he really listened to me and then advised me to go to hospital”

“I would always use A&E. There are more people around if something horrible goes wrong, they can do something”

“Dr Sturridge came out to see me at home at half past seven at night, which I wasn’t expecting but was marvellous. It was knowing that she cared and came round which made me feel better”
Results of focus groups – (3) New site

- Apart from the Mental Health Group. The general feeling was positive towards the new site.
- A number of groups felt it would be an excellent opportunity to expand the number of GP’s, increase the range of services and extend opening hours.
- Major concerns were around parking and transport, replication of services and the potential loss of links with local pharmacists.
- Around half the groups were concerned that the move could affect the friendly atmosphere of the practice.
Results of focus groups – (3) New site

New Site – Verbatim comments

“I cannot walk from the Oakmere car park, but since I suppose there won’t be enough spaces, I will have to”

“You could even have some private treatments available, as I am sure we would be willing to pay for them. It would be great to have a Chiropodist again”

“Is moving two practices together, just replicating efforts again? So should you be sharing resources, or just say GP’s just do their standard work and get a consultant in who deals with diabetes issues for both surgeries”

“I am scared it might lose the family atmosphere which makes this such a good practice. I went up to the Walk, and I hated it, as soon as I walked in, I was in the waiting room and it was like being in a hospital”
Results of focus groups – (4)

Positive Comments

- It is important to note that the overwhelming response of all groups was positive.
- Even those with complaints, felt that these were minor compared to overall excellence of the practice.
- The doctors were felt to be caring and concerned about their patients welfare.
- The practice was felt to have a welcoming and friendly atmosphere.
- The receptionists were singled out for praise by more than one group.
- The Nurse practitioner was felt to be an excellent service, by all those who had used it.
- Most felt they were lucky to be patients of the practice, especially compared to stories they had heard of other surgeries.
Results of focus groups – (4)

Positives

Positives – Verbatim comments

“When you come and see the doctors you feel as though they give you enough time and they actually care”

“Despite the frustrations of getting appointments. When you see a doctor, the treatment is fantastic”

“I couldn't fault the receptionists, compared to the stories I have heard at other places they are brilliant”

“I have been with this practice for 45 years and I have seen a lot of changes and I really truly haven't got anything negative to say. I am really happy and impressed”

“The receptionists are lovely and friendly and always do their best to help”

“I do believe that they genuinely do care. It's not just, next..next”

“This place has been like a breath of fresh air, the receptionists immediately put you at ease. It was very positive from that moment”

“I think what we are trying to say, is that we are all really happy with the surgery”
Results of focus groups – Communications

- The issue of communications came up time and again in the group sessions.
- It is clear that many patients are not aware of developments at the practice such as late surgeries and booking appointments after 9pm.
- This lack of communication applies in the main to those patients who do not regularly attend the surgery.
- Almost of the attendees, felt that e-mail would be the best way to communicate with them, but not more than once a month.
Results of focus groups – Communications

- Communications were also critical in encouraging patients to book appointments with ‘new’ doctors.
- Many of them claimed to be unaware of the names or specialism's of other doctors at the practice.
- More information in the form of e-mail bio’s were felt to be a good way to increase awareness.
- Given strength of feeling on the issue. It may not solve the problem.
Results of focus groups – Summary

- The vast majority of patients comments were positive.
- The practice is felt to be performing well.
- The booking process is frustrating those patients who want to see a particular doctor.
- The new site is seen as a positive development overall. But care should be taken to not create, too ‘clinical’ an atmosphere.
- Patients communications can be improved.