Clinic Cancellation Quality Improvement Project

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Introduction

The Patient Access Policy[1,2] describes the way in which the Trust manages patient referrals, waiting lists, appointments and admissions. The current policy:

- Describes the responsibilities of admission, validation, secretarial and management teams
- States that outpatient appointments are to be booked within five working days of referral, with maximum waiting time of 18 weeks from referral to first definitive treatment (RTT)
- Highlights the need to regularly validate waiting lists
- Ensures patients are given reasonable notice and choice relating to admission dates.

However, there are currently no specific standards for the cancellation and rebooking of outpatient appointments.

Aims and Objectives

The aim of this quality improvement project is to reduce the number of postponed or cancelled outpatient appointments. We evaluated reasons for postponed/ cancelled appointments, amount of notice given to patients and if appointments were subsequently rebooked appropriately.

Methods

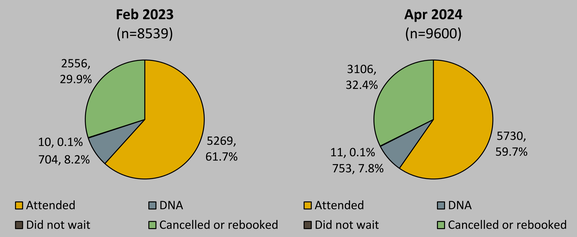
The following data was collected from all outpatient appointments at Moorfields Eye Centre, St George's Hospital over a four-week period (1st to 28th February 2023)

- Total number of clinic appointments
- Number of clinic appointments postponed/ cancelled by the patient
- Number of clinic appointments postponed/ cancelled by the hospital
- Amount of notice given to patients
- Number of times an individual patient had their appointment postponed/ cancelled
- Reasons for cancellation
- Timeframe in which appointments were subsequently rebooked

A re-evaluation after intervention was performed between 1st to 30th April 2024.

Exploring the Issue

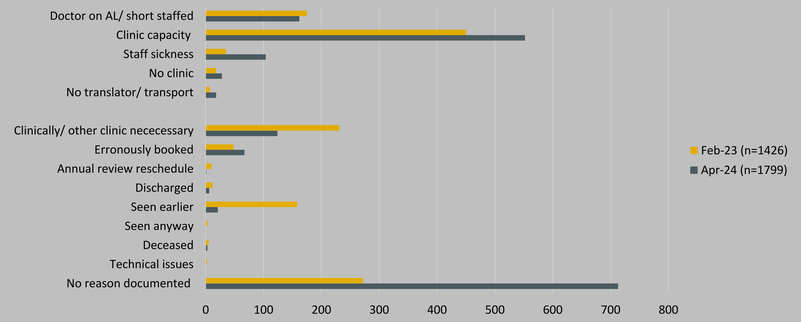
Appointments analysis



Notice period for cancelled appointments

	Feb 2023	Apr 2024
Mean days' notice	21.7	44.6
Range	0 to 354	0 to 357
Cancellations		
• On the day	111	88
• Day before	102	56
• Same week	606	609
• Same month	1123	1207
Rebooked		
• Prior to appointment	151	7
• Mean days to rebook	40	22
• Range	-28 to 163	0 to128

Reasons for cancellation by hospital



Patient impact

- 1 patient 4 appointments cancelled
- 8 patients 3 appointments cancelled
- 73 patients 2 appointments cancelled
- 1344 patients 1 appointment cancelled

Financial impact: NHS Payment Scheme[3]

- Ophthalmology outpatient new appointment: £152
- Ophthalmology outpatient follow-up appointment: £69* (below figures based on this fee only)

	Feb 2023	Loss (£)*	April 2024	Loss (£)*
Total no. of cancelled appointments	1399 (54.7%)	96,531	1678 (54.0%)	115,782
• By patient	585 (41.8%)	40,365	633 (37.7%)	43,677
• By hospital	814 (58.2%)	56,166	1045 (62.3%)	72,105
Total no. of rebooked appointments	1157 (45.3%)	78,933	1428 (46.0%)	98,532
• By patient	545 (47.1%)	37,605	674 (47.2%)	46,506
• By hospital	612 (52.9%)	42,228	754 (52.8%)	52,026

Corrective Actions

Short term measures:

- More effective clinic profiling in advance
- Coordinate clinicians' leave across multiple sites
- Improve departmental and managerial access to doctors' leave diary

Long term measures: develop cancellation policy

- Regular meetings with admin/ management staff
- 48 hours no cancellations working up to 1 week notice
- Fire break clinic for each subspecialty 6-8 weeks
- Clinician approval of cancellations
- Prioritise outpatient waiting list
- Rolling clinic approach

Discussion

Enhanced access to doctors' leave rota to the wider managerial teams has improved notice periods for cancelled appointments, these are also rebooked more promptly. However, access was only granted in February 2024, together with junior doctor strikes, improvement in cancelled appointments is not yet significant. Actual financial impact on the trust from ophthalmology cancelled appointments is likely to be higher as the current figures are based on follow-up appointments only. Furthermore, it is also important to explore reasons for DNAs to improve patient experience and free up clinic capacity[4].

Conclusion

Cancelled appointments have a significant financial impact on the NHS as payments are generated from the Payment Scheme by patients attending appointments. Effective coordination of staff leave and taking into account emergency cases by having one or two buffer appointments can prevent last-minute cancellations.

References

1. Moorfields Eye Hospital Patient Access Policy 2019
2. Moorfields Eye Hospital Referral to Treatment policy
3. 2023-25 NHS Payment Scheme (Amended)
4. NHS England. Reducing did not attends (DNAs) in outpatient services. February 2023.