



How Cymbio helped East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust meet referral targets and reduce DNA rates

Case study

East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust provides acute hospital and community health services for people living in East Sussex and surrounding areas.

The challenge

Following a review of the outpatient administration team patient the Trust found there were significant difficulties within the outpatient booking system. This was due to an absence of relevant knowledge and experience in systems and an absence of procedures to support effective booking. From the patient perspective, this meant that once they had been referred for a clinical consultation, the way referrals were managed meant there could be delays in treatment, or they could even be booked into the wrong clinic.

In March 2015 only 65 per cent of referrals were being processed within 48 hours. The outpatient booking system was also having an impact on income. The Trusts sees on average 1,500 patients a day and having set a target of never exceeding a backlog of 1,500 outcomes (i.e. one day's worth of backlog), they were missing this target. Even though there was time to recover the position before submission for payment, there was an inevitable impact on income.

It was also having an impact on staff morale, because all staff want to deliver an effective service. They were raising concerns on an individual level and through incident reporting. Concerns were also being raised by the clinical management executive and through the risk registers from each clinical unit.

What we did

We were tasked to reduce the variation in performance and outcome for key patient administration procedures. Initially we clarified in detail all the patient administration processes – what they are, where they occur and who manages them.

This helped establish where the problems were and we then worked with the Trust team to formulate a plan to develop standard operating procedures. A 'Scope Matrix tool' prioritised a set of 64 patient administration processes through a risk assessment approach and identified the relevant responsible management for each discipline.

The next step

This was a series of workshops to focus on signing off process improvement to address the key issues. Our standard operating procedure database helped us to structure and accelerate workshop outputs by taking the learning from more than a decade of similar projects.

The workshops were systematically structured around questions and decisions required to standardise a procedure. The workshop outputs allowed us to draft a set of standard operating procedures (SOPs). Once signed off, these SOPs were then used as training material to engage and educate staff in the use of the documents to drive correct procedural performance.

The aim was to standardise processes across our sites and we used the dashboard to measure improvement following the staff training. The process also ensured the administration team had a robust understanding of the key processes and areas for attention and helped prioritise other improvement workstreams, such as reviewing our call reminder systems and processes.

Results

Two key areas where we have seen improvements are:

- DNA rates which reduced from approximately 10% to 8% during the following 3 months.
- Meeting our target of registering 80% of referrals within 48 hours.



“The Cymbio team took a supportive and constructive approach, recognising that improvement relied on the successful adoption of the new operating procedures. Cymbio was instrumental in making sure staff felt listened to and could play a part in changing our systems and processes. The challenge will continue to be staff engagement, but having Cymbio’s insight and input has undoubtedly helped.”

Liz Fellows, *Assistant Director of Operations*,
East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust

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