



FPRG Newsletter No 10
Including Finchampstead Surgery News
Winter 2019

[The Missed Appointments Survey - a £73,440pa problem](#)

Welcome to our winter newsletter which largely deals with the results of the Missed Medical Appointments survey conducted in November 2018. We were very pleased that so many FPRG members agreed to take the survey. 211 completed surveys were recorded which compared to previous surveys was a very good result.

The Surgery had identified a problem with missed patient appointments which potentially costs the surgery some £73,440 per year and the Finchampstead Patient Forum volunteered to run a survey to better understand the problem.

[So what were the results of the survey?](#)

Nearly 60% said that they were aware of the problem and almost 100% agreed that something needs to be done to improve the situation. However, when asked: ***Do people think it does not matter as the NHS is a 'free' service?*** 56% agreed.

The surgery already sends a reminder text message to mobile phone users about imminent appointments, but the survey asked for other ideas to remind people, particularly those who do not regularly use mobile phones. More than 150 thought a good idea would be: ***A message received when making appointments by telephone.*** Also, a large number thought ***Posters in the Surgery and Messages on the surgery TV*** would be helpful.

There were several replies in answer to a request for other ideas these included: ***...If they won't change their ways ask them to leave the practice!***

Several thought a small charge could be made particularly for repeat offenders

However, others thought that the offenders might have dementia or mental health problems and suggested having GPs speak to them about the importance of not missing an appointment when they next attend. Quite a large proportion thought an e-mail or a landline message would be important.

Of the 207 respondents who answered the question ***Have you ever missed an appointment in the last 12 months?*** only 11 admitted to missing an appointment. Of these just over half said: ***I meant to attend but mixed up my appointment date / time*** another person could not leave the house, whilst another was detained by a road traffic accident. A couple simply forgot. Most remembered their appointment the same day. The rest remembered the next day. Most of the patients either called or visited the surgery to apologise and to make another appointment.

The surgery sends a text message reminder to patients' mobile phones. In the survey 63% said that they were not made aware of their appointment by their mobile. Another 18% said that they did not have a mobile phone.

Most of the missed appointments were of the routine type by people that have 1-6 appointments a year. This is a similar proportion to the main body of respondents of whom 78% said they have 1-6 appointments a year with 15% having less than one appointment.

Finally, the gender of the respondents was 66% female and 33% male. Their ages were quite evenly represented with 24% in the range of 35 – 54 years and 55% in the range of 55 – 74.

Summary

The surgery has nearly 16,000 patients so as a proportion, the survey numbers were quite low, nevertheless, they probably give a fair representation of the average patient's views. Besides the monetary costs, it should be noted that a missed appointment not only costs money but also deprives another patient of that surgery time.

The survey suggests that more needs to be done to make patients aware of the problem by using the waiting room TV and posters to draw patients' attention to the large numbers of missed appointments and maybe sending email reminders to patients which should work for those who regularly read their emails. Also, bearing in mind that 63% of the patients have a mobile phone and already have reminders sent to their mobile phones by the surgery, maybe the answer lies in the patients' own hands!

Commenting on the survey Julie Murphy, the Practice Manager, said: We are extremely grateful to the PPG for carrying out this survey and highlighting this issue to our patients. It is an ongoing problem and very frustrating. On average we are having **165 missed appointments each month this equates to 27 hours of Doctor and nurse time!** Text reminders are sent to patients 3 days before an appointment and again 1 day before an appointment, if an appointment is booked within 7 days a text reminder is sent 1 day before. All texts give the option to cancel an appointment. This system does rely on us holding an up to date mobile number and we try to do this when appointments are made and have a notice in reception asking for patients to update us with their contact details. Every month we update the information on our television screens in the waiting room highlighting the number of missed appointments in the previous month and the missed clinical hours. We do telephone patients advising they have not turned up for an appointment and we send a letter to patients who frequently miss appointments advising that it could lead to them being removed from our patient list.

ARE YOU HAVING A PROBLEM BOOKING AN APPOINTMENT? You can see above the reason why. Please cancel an appointment if it is not needed.

You can also register with on-line access and this will enable you to book and cancel appointments yourself via the internet and you will not need to telephone the surgery.

The FPF Committee

The Committee which is comprised of patients, the Practice Manager and a doctor, is in something of a crisis, with only three or four active patient members and some of them suffering from various medical problems. Can you help? Do you have some interest in providing a patient 'voice' and representing patients' views? Do you have experience of running surveys and handling simple office type programs? If you can say yes to any of these questions then please apply to join us. The commitment is not huge; we only meet four times a year at the surgery in the lunch time or early evening. Why not send an email to the FPF chairman at ppg.finchampstead@nhs.net

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