



Service Priorities and Programmes
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Enhancing Phone Enquiry Service in Specialist Outpatient Clinic to meet the increasing health care service

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Introduction

Specialist Outpatient Clinic (SOPC) service is part of secondary care which provides specialist care to patients in an outpatient clinic setting. Due to aging population, increasing volume of chronic medical diseases and early patient discharge, the service demand for SOPC service is rapidly increasing. Besides clinical consultation service, telephone enquiry service is also a basic provision in SOPC for patient enquiry. Handling phone enquiry may not always be addressed in service expansion plan. After relocation of SOPC to new Ambulatory Block, the existing one telephone line was inadequate to cope with the twofold increase of SOPC services. Inability to handle phone enquiries would lead to adverse patient experience and wastage of appointment quotas. Extension of phone enquiry system was imperative as to improve the tele-communication for SOPC patients.

Objectives

1)To enhance the accessibility of tele-communication provision for outpatient enquiry
2)To raise the capacity of phone enquiry service to cope with increasing SOPC service demand
3)To handle the phone enquiries timely and effectively
4)To improve patient experience on phone enquiry service

Methodology

The bottleneck of the service was identified in which one telephone line was inadequate to handle all SOPC phone enquiries for the increasing patient load. Other factors including noisy working environment and limited space at the window counter booking office had to be improved in order to enhance the effectiveness and to increase the throughput. With support from management level, "Call Centre" was set up in April 2017 and number of telephone lines was increased. A quiet and minimal disturbance working environment was created for staff to handle the incoming call. Training was provided to strengthen the clerical staff on handling phone enquiries of various specialties. Urgent enquiries related to clinical issues were forwarded to clinic nurses to get immediate advice.

Result

After the setup of "Call Centre", rate of picked-up call was increased from 55-60% to 99.5%. The average monthly voice mail received was reduced from over 1000 to 20.

Number of patients' feedback on unreachable phone enquiry service was "zero" while 4 cases and 7 cases were reported in 2015 and 2016 respectively. 655 cases cancelled the new case appointment through the phone enquiry service and wastage of appointment quotas was minimized.