HAC 2015 ABSTRACT for Speed Presentations

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Project title
Enhancement program of the physiotherapy out-patient appointment booking system for better new case management

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Introduction
With the continuous growing demand in adult out-patient physiotherapy service of the Hong Kong Buddhist Hospital from 2007/08 to 2011/12, the number of new case attendance was increased by 94.4% and the waiting time of new case appointment was therefore inevitably lengthened. The default rate of new cases in 2011/12 was 15% in which 47% of them called back for re-scheduling their first appointments. Hence, an enhanced appointment booking system was implemented for shorten the waiting time and better resource management.

Objectives
This program aimed to 1) reduce the default rate in order to shorten the waiting time; 2) better utilize resources by replenishing the defaulted new case quotas; and 3) reduce the need of forced appointments.

Methodology
This was a retrospective observational review study. An enhanced program of the physiotherapy out-patient appointment booking system at HKBH was undertaken in October 2012 by implementing a new workflow logistics. First, gentle reminding phone calls were made to new cases one week before their first appointment. Second, if the patients no longer needed and cancelled their appointment, the vacant new case quota(s) would be replenished by other new cases. Finally, the progress of phone calls and replenishment were monitored regularly by a professional staff to ensure the equity and effectiveness of the program. The default rates were compared before (January 2011 to June 2012) and after (January 2013 to June 2014) the implementation of the enhancement program. Analysis was done using independent-samples t-test.

Result
During the sampling period, there were 924 and 1,318 patients arranged their first appointment at our department before and after the implementation of the program respectively. The mean default rate was significantly reduced from 15.6±6.1 to 9.5±4.8 (39%, $p<0.05$) after the implementation of the program. The waiting time was shortened by 20% even with the total number of new case attendance increased by 53.3% at that time. The percentage of forced appointment was decreased by 51% and 116 new case quotas were replenished. The new enhancement program appears to be effective in lowering the default rate, shortening the waiting time and reducing the number of forced appointment with relatively low costing in physiotherapy adult out-patient department. Together with replenishment of the new case quotas, this program achieved better patient-centered care and utilization of resources.