

Patient Participation DES – Patient Survey Report Text Messaging As A Way Of Contacting Patients

The Heron Practice Patient Forum

The patient forum was established in 2008.

We currently have 11 members who are “face to face” members of the patient forum. Meetings are held on the 3rd Wednesday in February, May, August and November each year; additional meetings are convened as and when necessary to discuss specific or urgent issues. The meetings are chaired by the patient members on a rotational basis and are attended by the practice’s Senior Partner and Practice Manager. The patient forum will have met on 4 occasions between 1st April, 2013 and 31st March, 2014.

The practice established a “virtual” patient forum in 2011; this was set up and is facilitated through the practice website. This forum enables patients who want to provide feedback/comments to the practice, but who are unable to attend meetings, to do so; all correspondence is via email. Establishing this forum has enabled the practice to ensure we obtain feedback from more of our patients thereby giving us a more balanced view of what patients think of our services. The number of patients currently signed up is 336.

We have worked hard to increase the number of patients who are members of both the “face to face” and “virtual” patient forums; particularly in the underrepresented groups. Since April 2013 the number of “face to face” members has increased from 9 to 11 with the number of “virtual” members increasing from 193 to 336. We are pleased to note that there has been a significant increase in the number of patient members in the 25-54 age range; a group previously underrepresented.

We continue to actively promote both patient forum groups via our practice website, posters in the waiting room and by members of the practice team opportunistically asking patients if they would like to join one of the groups.

The breakdown of the current profile of the two groups is as follows:

	Number of Face to Face Patient Forum Members	Number of Virtual Patient Forum Members	Total Number of Patient Forum Members
Male	4	128	132
Female	7	208	215
Total number of members	11	336	347
Under 16	0	2	2
17 – 24	0	24	24
25 – 34	0	148	148
35 – 44	0	63	63
45 – 54	2	46	48
55 – 64	3	31	34
65 – 74	6	18	24
75 – 84	0	4	4
Over 84	0	0	0
White British	5	171	176

White Irish	0	7	7
Mixed White & Black Caribbean	0	2	2
Mixed White & Black African	0	0	0
Mixed White & Black Asian	0	0	0
Indian	0	6	6
Pakistani	0	1	1
Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Black Caribbean	0	2	2
Black African	0	8	8
Chinese	0	5	5
Other	6*	134*	140*

* The practice was required to migrate its clinical system from EMIS LV to EMIS Web in 2013 and the transfer of data resulted in the majority of existing patients being recorded as “other” (ethnicity and other related nationality data).

Background to the Survey

A number of patients had asked, via suggestions and general feedback, if the practice would consider introducing a text messaging appointment reminder facility. This included members of the “face to face” patient forum.

The practice felt that introducing such a facility would:

- provide a more efficient and better service overall for patients
- help to reduce the number of patients who DNA (did not attend) their appointments which, in turn, should help to reduce the waiting time for pre bookable appointments.

The idea to run a survey in order to obtain feedback and comment on whether the practice should introduce a text messaging facility was discussed with members at the patient forum meeting held on 20th November, 2013.

Members of the group were broadly in favour of the proposal; however they requested we make it clear to patients that they would not be able to text the practice. Details of how the survey would be undertaken eg. the proposed questions and how the survey would be advertised etc. were provided and members subsequently confirmed they were happy for it to go ahead.

The Survey

Questionnaires were made available to patients between Monday 9th December, 2013 and Friday 10th January, 2014. We chose the same period as last year because the lead up to Christmas/into the New Year is usually an exceptionally busy time for the practice and so it was felt this would provide an opportunity to maximise patient participation.

Informative posters were displayed in the reception area and information was included on the practice website encouraging patients to participate in the survey. The “virtual” patient forum members were sent an electronic copy of the questionnaire via our website which they were able to complete and return online.

In addition copies of the questionnaire were given to patients collecting repeat prescriptions and were also enclosed with letters the practice sent to patients during the survey period. Reception staff also encouraged patients to complete questionnaires while they were waiting for their appointment. Other members of the practice team opportunistically encouraged patients to participate in the survey whenever they had patient contact.

Results of the Survey

A total of 420 completed questionnaires were returned; the breakdown of responses for each question is detailed below:

Do you have a mobile telephone?

Total number of responses = 414 (420)

Yes = 400

No = 14

If you have a mobile telephone would you be happy to receive text messages from us?

Total number of responses = 412 (420)

Yes = 380

No = 32

If yes, would you be happy for us to text you in relation to the following?

	Yes	No	No Response
Appointment reminders	375	42	3
Test results	329	88	3
Issues relating to repeat prescription requests	355	62	3
Invites for annual reviews	339	78	3
Invites for follow up appointments	359	58	3
If we need to cancel or reschedule an appointment	357	60	3
Information concerning the practice	293	123	4

Are you male or female?

Total number of responses = 406 (420)

Male = 143

Female = 263

What age are you?

Total number of responses = 395 (420)

Under 16 = 2

17 – 24 = 24

25 – 34 = 124

35 – 44 = 87

45 – 54 = 65

55 – 64 = 47

65 – 74 = 35

75 – 84 = 7

Over 84 = 4

What is the ethnic background with which you most identify?

Total number of responses = 411 (420)

White British = 181

White Irish = 14

Mixed White & Black Caribbean = 6

Mixed White & Black African = 3
Mixed White & Black Asian = 6
Indian = 9
Pakistani = 5
Bangladeshi = 4
Black Caribbean = 20
Black African = 25
Chinese = 5
Other = 133

How would you describe how often you come to the practice?

Total number of responses = 389 (420)
Once a month or more often (12 or more times each year) = 61
Once every 1 – 2 months (6 – 12 times each year) = 95
Once every 3 – 4 months (3 – 6 times each year) = 120
Once every 6 – 12 months (1 – 2 times each year) = 113

Evaluation of the Survey

The results of the survey indicate that the patients who completed the questionnaire are overwhelmingly in favour of the practice using text messaging as a method of contacting them.

The breakdown in relation to the specific questions is as follows:

90% of those patients who responded were happy to receive appointment reminders via text

79% of those patients who responded were happy to receive test results via text

85% of those patients who responded were happy to receive texts relating to issues with repeat prescription requests

81% of those patients who responded were happy to receive their invites for annual reviews via text

86% of those patients who responded were happy to receive invites for follow up appointments via text

86% of those patients who responded were happy to receive texts if we needed to cancel or reschedule an appointment

70% of those patients who responded were happy to receive information concerning the practice via text

In view of the above and taking into account additional comments included on some of the questionnaires we are proposing to introduce text messaging as a method of contacting patients in relation to:

- appointment reminders – for all pre bookable appointments in surgeries and clinics
- test results – for negative results only
- issues with repeat prescription requests – for routine issues only
- invites for annual reviews
- invites for follow up appointments
- cancelling or rescheduling appointments
- information concerning the practice – for specific issues only eg. flu clinic dates

Review of the Survey Results and Proposals for Change – Patient Forum

Members of the “face to face” Patient Forum reviewed the survey results and draft patient survey report at the meeting held on 19th February, 2014.

Members subsequently approved the report for submission and publication.

Members have agreed to the proposals as detailed in the report and have requested that:

- the practice implement the proposals as soon as is practical
- the patient survey report be made available on the practice website and in the waiting area
- a copy of the patient survey report be forwarded to all “virtual” patient forum members
- copies of the patient survey report be made available for patients to take away from the practice
- the practice reports back on the progress made at the next Patient Forum meeting on 21st May, 2014