

Patient Emergency Access Point Project – Solutions to Address the Increasing Number of Category 4 & 5 Presentations to the Emergency Department

Kelly Foster¹, Nicola Ross², Joanne Johnson³

1 West Moreton Hospital and Health Service, Chelmsford Avenue, Ipswich, QLD 4305
PO Box 73, Ipswich, QLD 4305

2 West Moreton Hospital and Health Service, Chelmsford Avenue, Ipswich, QLD 4305
PO Box 73, Ipswich, QLD 4305

3 West Moreton Hospital and Health Service, Chelmsford Avenue, Ipswich, QLD 4305
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Background

Ipswich Hospital Emergency Department (ED) receives a significant number of Triage Category 4 & 5 presentations. Many of the presenting conditions were thought to be able to be treated within a primary care setting, and therefore this warranted further investigation. The presentations continue to be in excess of the current funding model and therefore necessitated the need for the project.

Aims

- Understand why members of the community are accessing primary care services through the ED
- Inform decision-making and provide alternate health choices
- Decrease the percentage of Category 4 & 5 presentations

Data and Diagnostics

A patient questionnaire was conducted to find out both presentation reasons and the patient's referral source. 56% were male, with the majority being between the ages of 11-30 years old. 57% of patients believed that their condition was too urgent for a GP, and 14% factored in cost as an issue.

Methods

The employment of a 'Health Care Navigator' (HCN), to provide patients with education about their health care choices, and utilising a mobile device to demonstrate how to access online booking for local GP's. The project has included building strong relationships with local GP's and facilitating a two way learning process with shared training, education and staff shadowing opportunities. A supporting media campaign to underpin the project has also been produced.

Conclusions

The project is currently being undertaken, however the benefits achieved thus far include:

- Strengthened relationships between tertiary and primary care
- Patient choice remains the core focus, with them being the driver for improved access to healthcare
- The HCN role provides patients with real time access to information and education on their healthcare access and options
- An increase in knowledge and access to healthcare choices for the patient, both now and in the future