

Gaining patient insight during COVID-19

A summary report of patient surveys
focused on experiences of outpatient
appointments at Guy's and St Thomas'
NHS Foundation Trust

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December 2020



Introduction

This report by the South London Cardiac Operational Delivery Network (ODN) provides a summary of findings from in depth surveys conducted on patients who had face to face outpatient appointments at Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust during the COVID-19 pandemic.

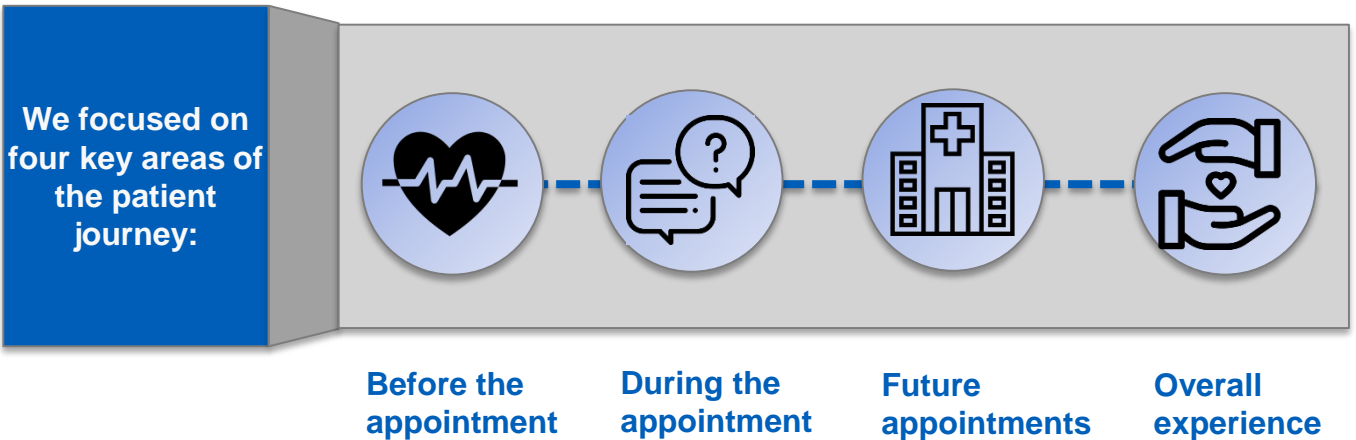
“How did you feel about coming into hospital during COVID?”

Background

- The aim of the survey was to better understand patient experiences of coming into hospital during COVID-19, views on virtual appointments and overall experience of the service. We would then use this insight to establish any further communications activity around COVID-19.
- Project managers conducted 30 surveys via telephone calls between 28 September and 22 October 2020. The surveys were conducted after patients had attended their appointments in hospital (April through September).
- Twenty-two patients attended general cardiac outpatient appointments at St Thomas' and eight patients attended a cardiology clinic at Guy's.



Themes



What did we ask?

- **Before the face to face appointment** – We asked patients how confident they felt about coming into hospital for their appointment and what concerns, if any, they may have had.
- **During the appointment** – We asked patients whether they were aware of the steps the hospital had taken to reduce the risk of getting COVID-19 whilst at hospital, and if they knew who to contact after they left and were worried about their condition.
- **Future appointments** – We asked patients about the types of virtual appointments we may offer in the future and their level of access and comfort for using technology.
- **Overall experience** – We asked patients how they felt about their overall experience following their outpatient appointment.

Themes | Before the appointment



Patient confidence

We asked patients how confident they felt about coming into hospital prior to attending their appointment. Three-quarters (75 per cent) of all patients felt very confident or fairly confident about coming in. Most (87.5 per cent) patients aged 55 and over felt very confident or fairly confident about coming into hospital, in comparison to 64.2 per cent of those aged under 55.

There was no difference in patient confidence levels whether the appointment was at the start of the pandemic (April to June) or later (July to September). However, the majority of our sample were seen later (21 patients, July to September; 9 patients, April to June).

What they told us

- 1. Transport:** Patients who were able to travel off-peak or use hospital transport felt more confident about coming into hospital. Some patients reported that it was their first time using public transport since before the pandemic.
- 2. Trust:** Patients trust the hospital to be a safe environment and believed that the hospital must have good reason to ask them to come in.
- 3. Experience:** Patients who had multiple appointments or appointments in other specialities felt confident to come to the hospital. However, patients who had been shielding or not leaving the house very often because of COVID-19, felt it was a big step to leave the house.
- 4. Knowledge:** Patients who knew in advance about measures in place at the hospital (from pre appointment phone calls) felt reassured to attend their appointment. Some patients felt that their individual actions, such as wearing a mask and using hand sanitizer, would protect them.



Themes | During the appointment



What happened during the appointment

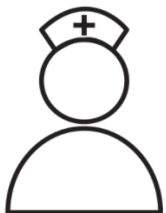
We asked patients whether they were aware of any measures put in place to reduce the risk of catching COVID-19 whilst at the hospital and if there were any other steps we could take to make them feel more comfortable about coming in.

- Nearly all (97 per cent) of patients noticed steps that had been taken to reduce the risk of getting COVID-19 whilst at the hospital. One patient assumed the hospital would be COVID-19 secure.
- Over three-quarters (77 per cent) of patients felt that there was nothing more the hospital could do. Some patients suggested temperature checks or to make hospital transport more widely available.

Who to contact afterwards

We asked patients whether hospital staff told them who to contact if they were worried about their condition or treatment after they left the hospital. Thirteen of 30 patients reported that they were not told who to contact afterwards.

What they told us



Over half (66 per cent) of patients noticed steps that individuals must take, including masks, hand sanitizer and staff wearing PPE.



Over half (52 per cent) of patients mentioned changes to the hospital environment, (e.g. spaced out seats, screens, a one-way system, directions on the floor, limits on numbers in the lift).

Themes | Future appointments



Digitalising the NHS

The [NHS Long Term Plan](#) (2019) set a goal to upgrade technology and digitally enable care across the NHS. The aim is to redesign services so that over the next five years patients will be able to avoid up to a third of face to face outpatient visits. This will save time for patients, free up significant medical and nursing time, and save an extra £1.1 billion a year on additional outpatient visits from face to face appointments as currently done.

Virtual appointments

We discussed the possible use of virtual appointments with patients. We asked patients for their appointment preference (telephone, video or face to face), and how comfortable they were using different types of technology, such as mobile phones and laptops.

Face to face appointments remain a highly favoured option:



47% of patients preferred face to face to any other type of appointment.



33% of patients preferred telephone to any other type of appointment.



20% of patients preferred video to any other type of appointment

63% of patients aged 55 and older preferred face to face, compared to 29% for those aged under 55. However, telephone was equally preferred by both age groups. Video was least preferred overall, particularly by those aged 55 and older (only 6% preferring video).



Themes | Future appointments

“I would rather see the doctor face to face... even though I have mobility and breathing issues.”

Virtual appointments

Most patients, regardless of age, are happy to communicate with GSTT using a mobile phone with or without internet access. A small proportion of those aged over 55 felt less confident and less able to use smartphones. Patients felt less confident and able to use other devices (e.g. computers, iPad), but are still generally happy to use. The number of those happy to communicate with GSTT using these devices declines by age group.

What they told us



Patients said that the type of technology they would want to use depends on the purpose of the appointment, such as receiving test results and any consequences as a result.



One patient was happy to use an app to send pacemaker readings as they would not have to travel into hospital. A patient with Parkinson's disease preferred using a laptop to a mobile because it would be easier to handle.



Patients are happy to have telephone appointments as they are used to them and think telephone is more reliable and easier than video.



Patients prefer face to face appointments to phone as they feel they may not be able to explain what is wrong over the phone very well.

Themes | Overall experience

“I felt like I had been given a new life.”

Overall experience

We asked patients to rate their overall experience of the service against one of the following options: very good; good; neither good nor poor; poor; very poor; or don't know.

All patients – 100 per cent – rated their experience as ‘good’ or ‘very good’. This is a 6 per cent increase in satisfaction levels compared to a cardiovascular outpatient survey recorded at GSTT conducted at the same time (April – September 2020).

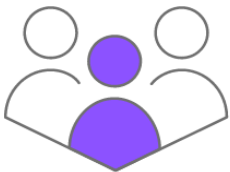
What they told us



Half of the patients left positive comments about GSTT. Many attributed this to the friendly and helpful staff.



Many patients enjoyed the hospital being quieter, and felt they had more time to be seen.



A small number of patients were concerned about social distancing and masks not being enforced.



A third of patients felt their appointment was quick and efficient.

Summary of key findings

1. All (100 per cent) of patients are happy with the service.
2. Three-quarters (75 per cent) of patients were confident in attending appointment in hospital.
3. No difference was found in patient confidence levels, whether their appointment was held at the beginning of the pandemic or later.
4. Nearly all (97 per cent) patients noticed steps taken to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission.
5. Face to face appointments are highly favoured, particularly by those aged over 55 years, in comparison to those under 55.
6. Patients are happy to use virtual appointments in the future, but their preferences vary depending on the purpose of the appointment.

"I felt very safe and confident the whole time whilst at the hospital."



Recommendations

Quick wins

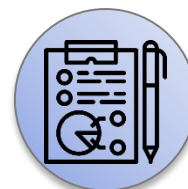
- Remind patients who to call should they feel unwell after their appointment.
- Change labelling in waiting rooms for patients attending with carers so they can sit together. Consider creating a protected space for patients visiting with their carers.

Survey

- Call patients who did not attend an outpatient appointment to understand their reasons for not attending.
- Call patients who have not had any face to face contact with doctors to understand their perspective.
- Roll the survey out to other hospitals / appointment types.
- Canvass patients with upcoming appointments to see if they will attend.

Longer term

- Consider moving some types of appointment to virtual.

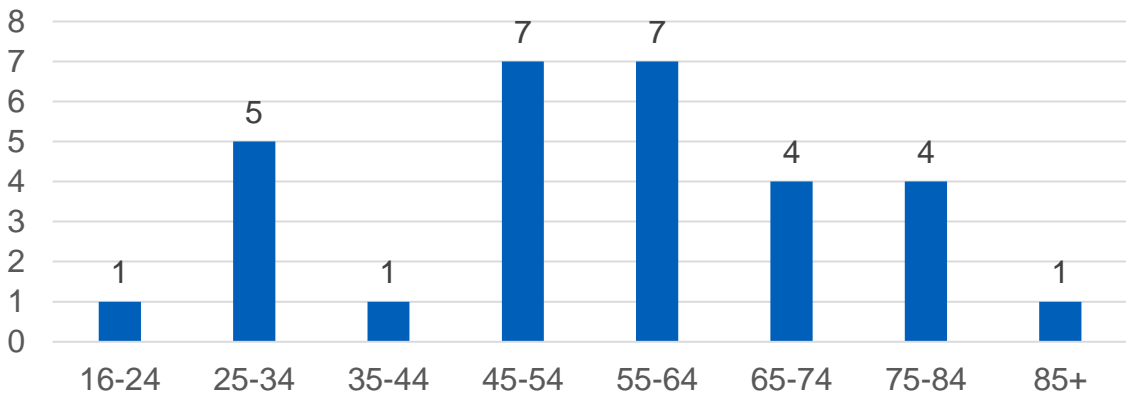


Appendix | Demographics

Who did we talk to?

We surveyed 30 patients (17 male, 13 female) from a diverse range of backgrounds.

AGE



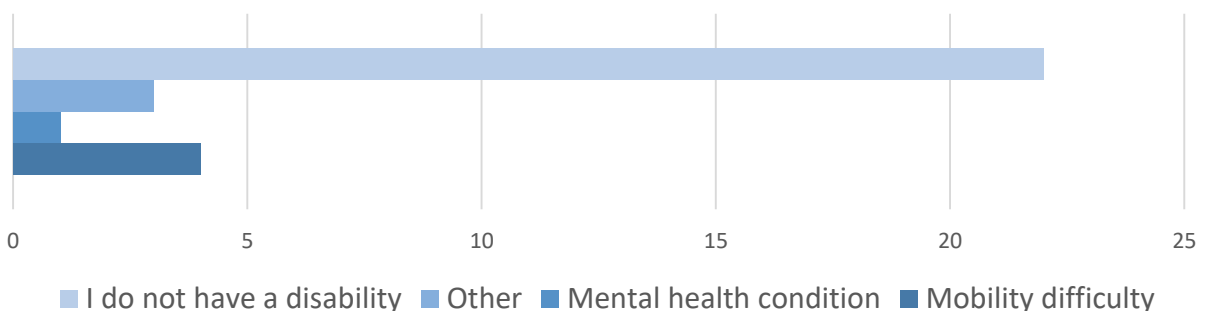
Religious background

Religion	Percentage
Sikh	4%
Christian	50%
Hindu	7%
Muslim	3%
Other	10%
No religion	23%
Prefer not to say	3%

Ethnic background

Ethnicity	Percentage
White British	44%
Any other white background	7%
Indian	3%
Any other Asian	10%
Black Caribbean	10%
Black African	20%
Any other mixed background	3%
Other	3%

Disabilities



Appendix | Survey Questions

1. How did you feel about coming into hospital for your appointment?

Answers: *Very confident; Fairly confident; Not very confident; Don't know/can't remember.*

- a. Please tell us more.

2. Did staff clearly explain what (if anything) you needed to do before coming in for your appointment?

Answers: *Yes definitely; Yes, to some extent; No, I did not need to do anything before the appointment.*

3. Did you have any concerns before you attended your appointment?

Answers: *Yes definitely; Yes, to some extent; No.*

- a. If yes, please tell us more.

4. Were you aware of any steps that had been taken to reduce the risk of getting COVID-19 whilst at the hospital?

Answers: *Yes; No.*

- a. If yes, please tell us more.

5. Are there any other steps which you think could be taken to make you feel more comfortable about coming in for your appointment?

Answers: *Yes; No.*

- a. If yes, please tell us what these may be.

6. Did you feel you were able to get everything you need out of the appointment?

Answers: *Yes definitely; Yes, to some extent; No.*

Appendix | Survey Questions

7. Did hospital staff tell you who to contact if you were worried about your condition or treatment after you left hospital?

Answers: *Yes definitely; Yes; No; Don't know / can't remember.*

8. In the future we may also offer patients the option of having a telephone or video appointment. Which of the following types of appointment would you be willing to use?

Answers: *Telephone; Video; Face to face.*

a. If yes, please tell us more.

9. Which of the following do you have regular access to, and how confident do you feel using them?

Mobile phone (without internet access); Smartphone (with internet access); Other mobile device such as tablet or iPad); Computer and/or laptop.

Answers: *Technology I have regular access to; I feel confident using; I don't feel as confident/able to use; I am happy to communicate with GSTT using this.*

10. Thinking about your recent appointment. Overall, how was your experience of our service?

Answers: *Very good; Good; Neither good nor poor, Poor; Very poor; Don't know.*

11. Do you have any other comments or suggestions?

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