

Project Summary

Patients aged between 18 and 75 suffering with conditions such as Irritable Bowel Syndrome are able to better self-manage their condition through on-demand patient webinars. Once diagnosed, patients can access specialist advice - which also covers other gastroenterology conditions such as Coeliac Disease and Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD) - on the NHS UK website. The resources have been endorsed by the British Dietetic Association, NHS England/Improvement and NHS Digital and feature generic NHS branding so could be adopted by any NHS organisations. The concept of on-demand, de-branded webinars could be developed for other conditions.

The Challenge

- Insufficient clinical time to meet demand for gastroenterology patients with long waiting lists for appointments and poor use of clinical time providing duplicated information to patients. An alternative effective way of delivering patient education was essential.
- The NHS Long Term Plan aims to remove a third of face-to-face hospital outpatient appointments, freeing up clinical time and allowing outpatient teams to work differently. Reduction in referrals using webinars could significantly contribute to this aim, and the money saved could be reallocated to areas of need.

The Solution

- Webinars are being used to create free, nationally available, accurate and reliable NHS patient self-management tools. Webinars empower patients and prevent the need for them to travel, take time off work, find care cover. They can download literature as needed and re-watch as often as they wish so encouraging consolidation of knowledge and patient self-management.
- Webinars reduce NHS staff demand, release clinic time, and substantially reduce costs with no need to administrate appointments, produce paperwork, supply printed literature and pay for postage. GP, consultant and nurse time are released as no referral is necessary, they simply give the patient the website address on diagnosis using a pre-printed 'business card', www.patientwebinars.co.uk

Costs & Resources

- Baseline requirements are a healthcare professional, a laptop and a microphone.
- Total baseline cost for initial year of setting up webinars is ~£1,200, including staff time (£800), business cards (£280) and microphone (£120). Webinars are recorded free via Zoom.
- Staff time costs are significantly reduced after the first year - ongoing maintenance is low cost with six monthly content reviews and ad hoc creation of new webinars (~2h).
- Staff costs are recouped in savings from the reduction of F2F appointments in the first year of webinars.

Benefits

- The specialist dietetic-led gastroenterology clinic saw a 44% drop in referrals into their 1-1 service in the first year, resulting in an estimated saving of £11k/yr and allowing clinicians to re-focus on areas of unmet need.
- Outcome data from over 1,171 pre-webinar patients and 443 post-webinar patients, ages 18-75yr, showed that knowledge improved from 56% prior to 95% post webinar, with 94% of patients likely or very likely to recommend the webinars.

About the Trust

The Trust, was formed on 1 April 2020 when Somerset Partnership NHS Foundation Trust and Taunton and Somerset NHS Foundation Trust merged. We are the first NHS trust in England to provide community, mental health and acute hospital services. We work with local health and social care partners to ensure that we deliver outstanding services that meet the needs of our population.

Testimonials

"Being asked by my GP to do a specialist diet without support or referral was setting me up to fail. Webinars should be distributed to every GP across the country...so patients can at least be given this content. Absolutely brilliant. My self-supported specialist diet, second time round was made all the easier with your resource. THANK YOU."

Patient Feedback

"Webinars have reduced patient wait times significantly with patients receiving advice straight after referral rather than a long waiting time for face to face consultation... many patients also prefer digital appointments at their own convenience. A reduced need to see IBS and coeliac patients has also enabled us to use face to face consultations for other conditions in a more timely manner... Digital services do not replace the need for face to face consultations but do greatly support the service."

Lisa Ledger, Community Lead Dietitian, Royal Cornwall Hospital

This Blueprint is available on the NHSFutures platform

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gdeblueprints@nhs.uk

For further information contact:

Name: Marianne Williams BSc Hons, RD, MSc
Occupation: Advanced Clinical Practitioner & Specialist Gastroenterology Community Dietitian
Email: Marianne.Williams@SomersetFT.nhs.uk