

Whatever happened to all those attempts to change access to General Practice?



Access to General Practice: Innovation, impact and sustainable change

GP-SUS Triage activity debrief.

The activity

This activity is a sequential puzzle that we have modelled on a series of questions and tasks that patients may have to complete to obtain an appointment.

Each small group is provided with a patient persona and a set of physical props such as hospital letters, a lock box, a mobile phone. The goal of the activity is to work together as a team to make an appointment. This is a timed task.

Group facilitators will take on the role of online or other triage systems that are used to assess and prioritise requests for appointments. The activity deliberately contains some seemingly 'impossible' features, but there are workarounds, sources of support and props that can assist the group in their quest for an appointment.

At the end of the task we reconvene to consider who got an appointment and how these might then be prioritised by the GP.

Take away message

Using triage systems to get an appointment can seem simple but may be difficult for some patients, especially when they are unwell. People trying to access General Practice may have time constraints in addition to individual and social factors that make using these systems challenging.

Personas

The personas used in this activity are derived from our case study data. They are composites of different patients and different access challenges designed to highlight how triage works and potential barriers to access.

- Language challenges / hearing or other impairment that restricts communication e.g. people whose first language is not English; people who have a hearing or speech impediment; people with difficulties with processing speed, attention, memory.
- Digital native – busy professional who can use digital. May be time impoverished and have restrictions on when they might be available due to professional commitments.
- Older person with more than one long term condition. Continuity of care is likely to be important; they may require a double appointment; lower digital literacy.
- Homeless person – may not have access to a phone or the internet; fear of discrimination; may have low health literacy, follow-ups and referrals difficult to manage.
- Single parent with school age children – not able to phone at 8am as taking children to school. Time poor and may not be able to complete online forms while caring for children.
- Carer for person with dementia or receiving palliative care – may have poor health literacy; may need a double appointment so they have time to absorb information; may find it difficult to have a call-back due to interruption by the person they care for.
- Person with neurodivergence – finds waiting rooms difficult due to anxiety and sensory overstimulation; prefers online communication; continuity with a trusted GP preferred.
- Person with mental health condition – prefers to book appointments online to avoid reception staff (perceived stigma); need for an advocate means phoning at 8am difficult; continuity important.

<p>GERALD SIMMONS</p> <p>You are an older man living alone at home – your wife passed away a few years ago. You have multiple long-term conditions that require regular interactions with the GP. You value your autonomy and take pride in the fact that, despite your age, you take care of yourself and live independently, although your groceries occasionally prove hard on a Saturday to push the trolley with you. You do not have a smart phone, computer or internet access at home. Your weight and hearing can be troublesome at times, and you struggle with breastfeeding and speak slowly.</p> <p>Your quest today is to book an appointment to see the GP for a chest infection. You are having difficulty breathing and are coughing up phlegm. You will have 15 minutes to do this. You may only use what is in your lock or around the room to achieve this. You will be interacting with one receptionist.</p>  <p>GP-SUS</p>	<p>PRATIMA PATEL</p> <p>You are a single mother in your thirties with three children under the age of 6. Even though you are doing your best, you find life rather hectic and often struggle to find the time to be organised with all the appointments and scheduled appointments at the General Practice. You suspect at least one of your children is behind with their communications and another one has become very fussy with their food recently, which you are concerned about. You are having difficulty sleeping and feel exhausted most of the time. You feel like you need help, but also are worried about being judged by professionals.</p> <p>Your quest today is to book an appointment to see a dietitian about your child's recent change in eating habits. Identify after 10:30pm this evening if it is diagnosed. You have time for another child also right before an appointment and are wondering whether to bring up their child's diet or waiting. You will have 15 minutes to do this. You may only use what is in your lock or around the room to achieve this. You will be interacting with the receptionist.</p>  <p>GP-SUS</p>	<p>JOY ADEBAYO</p> <p>You are a 22-year-old woman who has just finished university and moved home, so you are currently living out of town. You struggle with anxiety and found your exams made this worse, and recently you have been experiencing panic attacks which you haven't had before. You are nervous about going to see a GP as you don't know much about your options. You are also worried about being seen as needing their time and whether they will take you seriously. You found it difficult to choose a new General Practice, and have been looking at reviews online. You committed to see your letter to advocate for you or help you express yourself.</p> <p>Your quest today is to book an appointment to see a new GP to talk about recent panic attacks. You will have 15 minutes to do this. You may only use what is in your lock or around the room to achieve this. You will be interacting with the receptionist.</p>  <p>GP-SUS</p>
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