

healthwatch

Brighton and Hove

Patients' perspectives of the Physiotherapy OPD, at the Royal Sussex County Hospital 2016



1 Introduction

The visit to the Physiotherapy clinic was conducted by authorised Healthwatch Enter and View Representatives.¹ Representatives visited twice and interviewed nine patients. We used a semi-structured questionnaire which covered patients' experience with their appointment, the referral process to the clinic, and their consultation with the specialist. Representatives asked about the hospital environment, privacy and confidentiality, the reception areas and the quality of their experience. We sometimes found it difficult to get responses about experiences in consultations as patients often did not want to be delayed after the appointment. We also carried out 'Sit and See' observations.

Healthwatch reported initial findings to management on 19th August.

2 Summary findings

Patients were extremely positive about the quality of care provided in consultations. Patients we saw also reported effective management of appointments with no cancellations and only one patient reporting not being seen on time. These figures should be treated with caution, however, as we were only able to interview a small number of patients. When we carried out a follow-up visit, we were informed that delays in people getting appointments and cancellations were as widespread in the Physiotherapy department as in other OPDs. The Physiotherapy department had responded by taking some direct referrals.

Key findings

clinical care

The review found patients using the Physiotherapy clinic were very complimentary about the quality of care provided at their consultation. All (100%) patients reported that their overall experience at the consultation had been 'good' and positive assessments were made about various aspects of the consultation (personal notes and relevant information available, opportunity to ask questions, and choices of treatment offered and explained). Patients often praised the quality of care provided by clinical staff.

¹ Enter and View authorised representatives.

100% 'Very Good' assessment of clinical care n=8



referral process

No patients reported that a previous appointment for their condition had been cancelled, comparing very favourably to the OPD average of 22%.

No patients had previous appointment cancelled n=18



appointment timeliness on day of consultation

Only one patient of the eight we spoke to reported they were not seen on time on the day of their consultation. This proportion is significantly lower than the 41% average for OPD overall.

good waiting environment

Patients gave generally positive assessments of various aspects of the waiting environment at the clinic. Over 70% of patients surveyed rated all six of the environmental features (seating comfort, sufficient seating, drink availability, signposted toilets, ventilation and lighting) as 'good or 'very good'. Only 'toilet signposting' received a 'poor' rating from a small number of patients.

good customer relations

All of the patients surveyed reported they had been made to feel welcome when arriving at reception. This figure is higher than the OPD average of 95%.

3 Observations

First Impressions

It is difficult to believe when approaching the Latilla Building that it was functioning as a hospital service. It was dilapidated and was due for demolition. It had been in this condition for some time. We were told that the Department was moving to the temporary Hanbury Unit in September. Although there was a sign outside the Latilla Building saying it was the Physiotherapy and Rheumatology Department, it was not very noticeable and partially obstructed by a parking machine. There was no sign on the door to suggest the building was open.

Once in the building we observed that the condition of the foyer varied from clean and tidy to unclean with discarded equipment in the area. There were hand sanitisers but they were not well signed and we did not see anyone using them.

We have made some recommendations about the fabric, but we are aware that relocation of the Latilla Building may deal with these issues.

Recommendation

We anticipate that all of the environmental issues identified will be remedied in the new service environment.

Recommendation

There should be a welcoming sign on the door of the Latilla Building indicating that it is open for business. Attention needs to be paid to the cleanliness of the foyer. Signage to the hand sanitisers needs to be more clear.

Reception Area

To reach the Physiotherapy Department, patients need to walk through the Rheumatology reception. There were plenty of chairs for Physiotherapy patients in rows. Seating was seen as satisfactory by most patients. When we visited patients were called in on time and this was reflected in patients' feedback to us.

There was little natural light and one patient remarked it was "a bit grim" and that he had "last come here 15 years ago and he thought the paint was the same back then." Maybe it had been decorated but the comment reflects some of the negative feelings about the environment.

The waiting area was clean and quiet and appeared well organised. It was very warm with little ventilation. Overall, 76% of patients we spoke to using the Physiotherapy Department rated it as good, compared with the 75% average score for all OPDs we visited. This figure compares favourably with the Rheumatology Department which is adjacent to it, where no one said the environment was good.

The signage was not good. The reception area was somewhat hidden. On entering the waiting room, many patients were puzzled about where to check in.

The main notice board was extremely cluttered and whilst attempts had been made to provide information, it could be too confusing to be really useful to patients.

Some people commented on the signage to the toilets: 28% said it was poor. The main men's toilet had a faulty latch and there was no sign to indicate this.

Referrals to the clinic

Most patients we saw seemed to have received their appointments in a timely way, though we saw few patients. When we visited to give feedback on 19th August, we were told that the same problems we had found in other OPDs with cancellations, postponements and delays in appointments had occurred with the physiotherapy patients.

With the patients we saw, when there was a delay in receiving physiotherapy, it appeared to be related to delays in being referred for physiotherapy by the GP. One man had waited 9 months to be referred by his GP and was not fit for work but his sick pay had run out due to the delay and he was forced to return prematurely to manual work.

No physiotherapy appointments had been cancelled on the day we visited. Most patients reported being seen on time (88%) and all patients felt welcomed when they arrived at the reception. We did not see any evidence of breaches of confidentiality in the waiting area. In our interviews, no patients reported that confidential information could be overheard when discussed at reception. However, in the main treatment area patients are separated only by curtains and overhearing was routine.

Recommendation

When the Department moves to its new building, attempts to provide confidential space for physiotherapy treatment should be made.

4 Conclusion

The Physiotherapy Department was commended by patients and despite being in a dilapidated building they thought it provided a good service. Despite the age of the building the environment was generally rated well by patients. Attention needs to be paid to the cluttering of information boards and privacy in treatment areas in the new building to which the service will be moving shortly.