

Chairman: Dr P Fielding FRCGP

Lay Secretary: Mr M J D Forster

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| All practices in Gloucestershire (by email) | 9th August 2017  |

**E-REFERRALS**

Situation. The national system of electronic referrals sends a letter to the patient if there is no appointment available advising the patient to contact their GP.

Problem. The GP practice is in no position to do anything unless the patient’s condition has worsened to such an extent that a higher priority can be put on the referral. Usually all that the practice can do is to ring up the hospital and try to sort things out. This is happening more and more and is taking up precious time for medical secretaries in the practices who might otherwise be doing the jobs they are paid for.

Solutions.

* We understand that if there is no appointment available then the Acute Trust intends to send a letter to patients explaining that there is currently no appointment and that they will be in touch with the patient when one becomes available.
* From the practice’s perspective it would be much better if the patient contacted the hospital direct with any query and a suggested template letter is attached to encourage this.

The Future. We know that part of the problem is also caused by the introduction of the Acute Trust’s new TrakCare IT system. The difficulties with this system are being addressed, with urgency we are assured, so the need for such letters may diminish. We certainly hope so.

**M J D FORSTER**

**Lay Secretary**

Att:

Draft letter to patients about e-referrals

<Practice heading>

<Patient name etc>

Dear <patient>

Your case has been referred electronically to Secondary Care for an appointment to see a specialist. We hope that the next thing you receive will be details of an appointment. If, however, there is no appointment available:

* You will probably receive a letter saying that they will be in touch when one becomes available. If you have not heard anything further within a reasonable time (say 2 weeks) you should ring the hospital to find out what is going on.
* You will certainly receive one saying that because no appointment is available you should contact us, the practice.
	+ If your condition is getting significantly worse as a result of the delay then do come in for a GP appointment. It may be that your case should then be given a higher clinical priority.
	+ Otherwise you should contact the hospital to find out what is going on. Unfortunately, that is all that the practice would be able to do on your behalf if you were to contact us, as instructed in the letter. Cutting out the middleman in this way will give you some control over your own care. It will also help us a lot as the time we would otherwise have spent on the phone to the hospital on your behalf will be better spent in seeing other patients.

Thank you for your co-operation. If you have any queries about this then do get in touch.

Yours sincerely

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