Go With The Flow
Safeguarding Vulnerable Patients

What Were The Problems?

1. Patients seen within the Special Care Dental Service who did not attend (DNA) or were not booked (WNB) to a dental appointments, may not be followed up adequately, and fall between the cracks.
2. Patients and Families disengaging with our service.

Consequences of not following up DNA/WNB patients:

- Vulnerable patients suffering from pain/suffering/infection from untreated teeth
- Vulnerable person/Child neglect or dental neglect ‘going undetected
- Emotional distress (patient & family)
- Missed school & work attendance

What Was The Plan?

- To improve the follow up of DNA/WNB patients within the Special Care Dental Service by using a standardised user friendly flow chart which would involve the entire dental team based upon our services Local Operating Procedure (LOP).

Aims and Objectives

- For 100% of all WNB patients to be followed up with the re-engagement process.
- To increase the awareness and engagement all staff members, within the dental team, with the WNB/DNA procedure and ensure they understand it relevance to safeguarding.
- To standardise the WNB/DNA process across the East Area Solent NHS dental service.

What Did We Do?

1. Investigated the Problem
   - Completed a Data Audit - This investigated the current rebooking of WNB/DNA appointments.
   - Staff Survey — This was sent out to 5 special care dental clinics. We wished to find out if they felt confident patients were already being followed up correctly and if they found the current flow chart user friendly.
   - Patient Survey – discussed verbally with all patients who came for an appointment after being followed up after a DNA/WNB appointment.

2. Audit of data from data, staff and patient surveys

3. Created a new flow WNB/DNA flow chart.

4. Travelled to 5 clinics to give a presentation on WNB/DNA appointment follow up and raise its relevance to safeguarding. We explained the use of our new flow chart and the results of the survey with our colleagues.

5. Re-Audited data—After 2 weeks of use, we sent out a second survey to staff to re-evaluate the effectiveness of our presentation and flow chart.

What Did We Achieve?

Patient Survey

- Patient wishes were difficult to address as the staff completing the project were not in management positions
  - We were unable to change the services opening hours
  - We encouraged the use of the service’s appointment text messaging service
  - Requested managers contact IT to see if services phone number can be revealed.

Secondary Data Audit

- 75% of patients are now seen within 9 weeks of missed appointments

A new flow chart was developed. This was sent out to 5 special care dental service who did not attend (DNA) or were not booked (WNB/DNA) appointments.

What Did We Find?

1. Patient Survey
   - Patients reported they would have preferred:
     - More appointments available outside of school hours / in school holidays
     - To be contacted via text message or email rather than by phone
     - For the special care department caller ID to not appear as unknown.

2. Staff Survey
   - Dental therapists and dentists felt fairly confident that the majority of DNA/WNB patients were being followed up appropriately.
   - Staff felt the current Local Operating Procedure (LOP) and flowchart was not very user friendly. The most common comment was that it was “ugly”.
   - A wide range of methods were being used by staff to track patients who missed appointments.

3. Initial Data Audit
   - 50% of patients were seen within 9 weeks of a WNB/DNA appointment. Therefore 50% of vulnerable patients who WNB/DNA are at risk of being ‘lost between the cracks’.

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Recommendations

- Patient feedback is followed up regarding the services outgoing phone number not being withheld
- The flow chart is implemented into the services LOP for WNB/DNA appointment follow-up
- The whole service is given training on the follow up of WNB/DNA appointments and use of the new flow chart.