

GEMs offer brief updates from general practice research tackling the challenges of front-line practice.

Patient use of an online triage platform: a mixed-methods retrospective exploration in UK primary care

Helen Atherton

The clinical problem tackled by this research.

General practice increasingly encouraged to adopt digital means of providing access to patients. Online triage tools have grown in popularity and they allow patients to place a query online and receive a call back or online message from the GP. It is claimed they increase access and aid demand management but evidence is limited.

What this research tells us about the problem

Online triage is used by patients in the same ways they use standard types of consultation. The majority of contacts were on a Monday and Tuesday between 8am and 10am, which is the most popular time for trying to book an appointment. When we examined the types of problems that patients were seeking help for these were in line with problems presented using conventional methods of consulting.

A younger population used the platform with usage most common in those aged 25-34 years. Women were more frequent users than men.

The advantages described by patients such as convenience and ease of use were often context dependent.

The research team (*Primary Health Care Scientists)

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Suggested WISE action

Consider discussing with your Patient Participation Group (PPG) how to ensure your practice online triage platforms meet the needs of all your practice population.

Useful resources

Using online consultations in primary care: implementation toolkit

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/using-online-consultations-in-primary-care-implementation-toolkit/>

How to conduct written online consultations with patients in primary care

<https://www.bmj.com/content/372/bmj.n264>

Where you can read more about this work

<https://bjgp.org/content/early/2019/03/25/bjgp19X702197/tab-article-info?versioned=true>

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