

## WMC PATIENT SURVEY REPORT 2014

### ACCESS TO MEDICAL SERVICES

#### INTRODUCTION

The 2014 Watling Medical Centre Survey was conducted on ACCESS TO MEDICAL SERVICES. The aim of the study was to get an insight into the levels of satisfaction which patients had with services being provided and to identify any aspects with which they were not satisfied. The intention was that on the basis of responses received, and in the context of resources available to the Practice, appropriate action could be taken to ensure that patients were getting optimum access to medical services provided at, or through, Watling Medical Centre. 222 patients completed the questionnaire.

Questions 1 and 2 focused on patient experience and level of satisfaction with booking of appointments to see a doctor or nurse at Watling Medical Centre.

#### Question 1a

**Which of these methods have you used to book appointments to see a Doctor or Nurse?**

Responses	Telephone	Online	At Reception Desk
	67%	5%	27%

Comment: Booking by telephone was clearly used more often, followed by patients going to the Reception Desk to make appointments.

#### Question 1b

**Say which method you prefer and why.**

Responses given for preferring a particular method included the following:

#### Preference for the personal touch

- I like the telephone or Reception because the appointment is fixed with a personal touch.
- At Reception one can talk face-to-face to someone immediately.
- On the telephone it is easier to explain to a person than to a machine and get exactly what is needed.
- At Reception you have to wait in line but always someone is available.
- I prefer the telephone. It is more accessible and personal.\*
- By telephone, because I speak to people who understand my needs.
- At the Reception – I like the human contact.
- I prefer the telephone because it's much easier to call and talk.



26%

53%

21%

It is clear that many patients experience some difficulty when trying to book an appointment as 74% of them reported experiencing difficulty Often or Sometimes. Only about a quarter (26%) said that they never experienced difficulty when trying to get an appointment.

**Question 2b. Tell us in one or two sentences what type of difficulty (if any) you have had.**

The telephone system was identified as the problem by many of the respondents who gave reasons why they were experiencing difficulties when trying to book an appointment.

Comments included the following:

Telephone bookings:

- You can't get through on the phone at 8.30 and when you finally do, all appointments are gone.
- The phone is often engaged.
- I used to call sometimes, but could not get through or if I called early in the morning I was told they were fully booked.
- Getting through on the phone in the morning is difficult.
- Appointments are not available as the line is engaged from 8,30. It is very frustrating when you are unwell.
- Getting through on the phone. Often I don't get through until 9 a.m. and then appointments are not available.

The level of dissatisfaction with the way in which attempts to make telephone bookings are handled, is an important issue which needs to be addressed. This should be done in the context of an awareness of, and responsiveness to, the preference which many patients expressed for using the telephone. It would seem that many prefer using the telephone but are not satisfied with the way in which the process is organised. Emphasis on the use of Online booking or going to the Reception may therefore not solve the problem.

Advance booking

Others reported encountering difficulty when trying to book appointments in advance

- Poor client service at the Reception desk when trying to book advance appointments and not being able to do so.
- I have always been told you cannot book appointments in advance.
- I used to be able to pre-book appointments but now I am told this is not possible.

There seems to be some confusion about the pre-booking of appointments and it may be useful to provide clear guidelines to patients.

**2c. What do you think the surgery can do to make it easier for you to get the appointment which you prefer?**

As would be expected , given the dissatisfaction expressed about the time wasted waiting to get through to a receptionist on the telephone, some comments focused on this:

Telephone Bookings

- Get more telephone lines.
- Get more dedicated phone capacity, allied to a system fit for purpose, which includes ring back within 5-10 minutes maximum.
- Put more people on the telephone lines.
- Provide the opportunity to book an appointment on telephone at least a day or two before the day, rather than calling on the morning of the day on which you need to see the doctor,
- Make Reception open for making appointments from 8 a.m.

Online bookings.

Another suggestion was that patients should be encouraged to make more use of Online booking. This could free up the telephone for patients who wanted to use it.

Availability of doctors:

Some of the responses indicated that the problem could be more than just access to the telephone, but actually reflected the need to get more doctors or to extend the hours for which doctors were available to see patients.

Comments included :

- Bring in 1 or 2 more GP's that people will learn to trust.
- Open earlier in the day and later in the evening.
- Extend the hours when the surgery is open.
- Open the surgery at weekends.
- Plan to make appointments for the evening

Other comments suggested new ways of meeting the challenges posed when making appointments:

- Separate the appointments desk from the reception desk.
- Let doctors book patients in for any necessary follow-up appointments.

- Discourage patients who come in to the surgery for minor ailments. Instead have an Advice line where people can speak to a clinician and get advice.

**Question 3a. Do you usually use the same doctor when you visit the surgery**

Yes	No
50%	50%

**Question 3b. Would you prefer to see the same doctor when you visit the surgery?**

Definitely Prefer	Prefer	Don't mind seeing different doctors.
44%	34%	22%

Comment: : The majority of patients prefer to see the same doctor though some feel more strongly about this than others..

**Question 4(a). Tell us how satisfied you were with each of the following methods which you have used to get treatment from a doctor /nurse.**

Consultation Type	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied
Face to face	78%	21%	1%
Telephone	52%	39%	9%
Online	47%	19%	33%

Comment: It is clear that for each of the approaches to consultation which were listed, most patients were either satisfied or very satisfied. Face-to-face consultations got the best rating with 99% of the respondents being very satisfied or satisfied. Telephone consultations were also highly rated with 91% giving the rating of being very satisfied or satisfied. Online consultations were not as highly rated with about a third (33%) of the respondents being dissatisfied. It seems that personal contact is much appreciated by patients. Telephone consultations which provides a level of contact with a doctor (albeit from a distance) is the second most preferred option.

**Question 4b. Tell us why you have indicated that you were satisfied or dissatisfied with any of the methods listed above.**

Many of the responses pointed to the fact that the face-to-face consultation afforded the best opportunity for the patient to explain her/his problem fully and it gave the doctor an opportunity to see the problem and ask pertinent questions.

Comments included the following:

- Face-to-face because I find I am able to explain my problems better.
- The doctors are able to understand the problem, examine it and explain in simple terms followed by prescribing..
- The doctor can see my actual health condition.
- When I ring for a doctor, I usually have a good reason and need to see one face-to-face.
- Seeing and talking to the same doctor helps.
- I find it easier to talk face-to-face to a doctor or nurse.
- My issues are always resolved each time I meet a doctor at the surgery.
- I get good attention. The doctors take time. The consultation is not rushed.
- The conversation is very clear and calming.
- Face-to-face is preferred, Human contact. I can tell a lot from the doctor's or nurse's face.
- Face-to-face is easier to understand.
- The doctor makes me relaxed and never rushes me. I feel as if I can tell the doctor anything in confidence.
- Face-to-face – the human contact is very important.

Some comments indicated a generally high level of satisfaction with the doctors:

- The doctors listen to our health worries and are very attentive.
- The doctors are very empathetic and listen to my problem and give advice accordingly..
- I have faith in my doctor.
- I feel the doctors at the surgery take an interest in your condition and discuss a plan of action with the patient.
- I have always been happy with the doctors attitude and treatment.
- The doctors are kind, polite and professional.
- They listen.
- I have been with the surgery for 22 years and every doctor is kind, patient and understanding.

Comments on the advantages of telephone consultation include the following:

- The doctor is excellent – will always have time. If he/she commits to a telephone call, he/she will always call.
- I know the doctor does not necessarily have to see me to treat me.

Some patients pointed to the differences which they saw in the various types of consultations and indicated that this determines which type they use.

- I am very satisfied with the face-to-face because I can understand my treatment. I am dissatisfied with the phone consultation because I don't always understand.
- I can't go online because I don't have a computer
- Online is difficult because I am dyslexic.

**Question 5a. How satisfied are you with the Opening hours at the surgery?**

	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied
Core (Monday-Friday 8.30 am-6.30pm)	55%	40%	5%
Extended (Monday 6-30-7.30 pm and Sat 8-30-10.30 am)	68%	28%	4%

Comments: Most patients indicated that they were very satisfied or satisfied with the core and extended Opening hours at the surgery.

**Question 5b Tell us about any other way in which you think the surgery can make Opening hours more convenient for patients,**

In spite of the high level of satisfaction expressed with regard to opening hours, it was clear that many patients felt that more could be done to increase access to the service. Many suggestions were about extending the hours when the surgery is open and introducing more flexibility to suit the needs of patients who go out to work.. Suggestions included the following:

- Opening late on a few evenings or every evening during the week to help patients who go to work.
- Opening early – 7.30 am.
- Early Opening at 8 am,
- Opening on Saturday for a few hours.
- Opening on Saturday up to 6.30 p.m.
- More appointments available at weekends.
- Opening every day until 8 p.m.
- Surgery should be open till 7 p.m. on more days for those who work.

- Longer emergency hours during the day
- More evening and weekend appointments,
- Is there any hope of an afternoon or morning appointment during bank holidays?
- Make patients more aware of the extended Opening hours.
- The lunch time hours when the surgery is closed should be shortened to one hour.
- Make it possible for patients to ring for test results during the surgery lunch hours as it is difficult for some patients to phone during their own working hours.

**Questions 6a and 6b addressed the needs of patients with disabilities.**

**Question 6a, If you or someone whom you help to get treatment has a disability or a problem (e.g. with walking, hearing, communicating in English ) how well do you think that the surgery provides for them so that they can access treatment?**

Very adequately	adequately	Not adequately
43%	51%	6%

Only about half of the respondents answered this question.. This was not unexpected because many of them would probably not have any disability or be responsible for anyone with a disability. However, those who responded indicated that they felt that access to medical services was very adequate or adequate for patients with a disability.

**Question 6b. Tell us about anything which you think the surgery can do to make access better for these patients.**

Responses included the following:

- Help with walking aids and hearing aids.
- Higher-backed chairs providing more head support
- An interpreter for patients who do not speak English
- Keep on asking the Local Authority to provide more parking bays for people with disabilities.
- Parking facilities are inadequate. This makes it difficult when you have kids, but I know this is not under Watling Medical Centre's control.
- Having a front door which opens automatically. The current door is very heavy..
- I have hearing problems and it is sometimes difficult to hear at Reception when the surgery is busy.
- Providing transport. I rely on someone to get me to the surgery. It would be nice to get transport ( other than public transport) that could take me.
- Arrange home visits.

Comment: Some of the issues can be addressed by the surgery e.g. heavy doors, low chairs. Hearing and walking aids. However some appear to be outside the control of the

surgery although they can be advocates for patients e.g. in discussions with the Local Authority with regard to parking facilities.

**Question 7. There is a Minor Ailment Service which Burnt Oak patients can use to get free treatment (if eligible) direct from a pharmacy without having to go to Watling medical Centre? If symptoms persist you should see a doctor.**

(Minor ailments include Athletes foot, constipation, cough, cystitis, diarrhoea, earache, fever, indigestion, hay /fever, allergic rhinitis/allergies, head lice, insect bites/stings, mouth ulcers, sore throat, sprains/strains, teething, vaginal thrush, verrucas, upper respiratory tract infection, warts).

**7a. Do you know that this service is available?**

Yes	No
21%	79%

**7b. Would you use this service or have you already used it?**

Yes	No
63%	37%

This question was designed to find out patients attitude to the provision of this type of service. It was recognised that patients at the Burnt Oak surgery – where this facility is available , and at Stanmore - where it is not available, might not yet be aware of its existence. Their comments in 7c and 7d give further insight about their attitude to the service and this could provide guidance about how Watling Medical Centre could promote its use.

**7c. If YES, What do you like or dislike about having treatment in this way?**

**Comments which indicate a positive attitude to the idea;**

- Makes treatment quicker and easy
- Hopefully it will give instant access to treatment.
- Gives accessibility without having to make an appointment.
- It takes care of minor issues before they escalate into more problematic issues.
- It will save time and help to get patients treated when the surgery is closed.
- I prefer the pharmacist to the GP if it is something minor.
- Many pharmacists are open when doctor's surgeries are closed.
- It is more convenient for simple treatment and in this way can save time so patients with serious problems have a greater chance of seeing a doctor promptly.
- If there is a specialist on - Why not?

**Comments which indicate reservations about the idea.**

- I have not used it but I would dislike not having personal attention from a doctor.
- It would concern me that I can be diagnosed without seeing a doctor.
- I just want to be sure that the medicine I am prescribed is the right one.
- It would depend on the health of the patient. I would rather consult a doctor to be on the safe side.
- The pharmacist may be unaware of other medical problems.

**8a. Watling Medical Centre runs several clinics/services. Please tell us how you feel about those which you have used.**

Service/Clinic	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Not satisfied
Long term conditions	67%	30%	3%
Child Health Services	62%	36%	2%
Flu immunisation	77%	21%	2%
Travel Advice	53%	42%	5%
Well Woman and Family Planning	46%	51%	3%

**Comment:** The figures show that there is overwhelming satisfaction with the service provided at the Clinics. People who expressed dissatisfaction were 5% or lower.

**8b. If you have a long-term condition, who would you prefer to see for routine monitoring?**

Doctor	Nurse	No preference
72%	10%	18%

Comment: Clearly patients prefer to be seen by a doctor even if monitoring is routine.

**8c. Tell us about anything which you like about these services.**

Comments included the following:

- I can only say that I have been completely happy with the doctors and nurses since registering at WMC – for 28 years.
- I prefer to see the doctor as it enables me to discuss anything that may be worrying me.
- The doctors are brilliant and very understanding

- The doctors are always polite patient and ready to listen.
- Personal, direct, honest in both attitude and treatment and open to patients suggestions.
- I have found the nurses and doctors to be very understanding and ready to listen.
- The nurses are very friendly.
- Being seen by the same person so they get to know you.
- Seen by the same person means continuity.

**8c. Tell us about anything which you dislike about these services.**

There were very few comments in this section. This is a reflection of the high level of satisfaction expressed in question 9a. Some of the comments pointed to the need for more information rather than dissatisfaction.

**Comments**

- When I have blood samples taken, I have conflicting advice about eating during the previous twelve hours.
- I need to be reminded when to come for checks.
- Flu immunisation at Stanmore started too late. They could start at the beginning of September for high risk patients and then continue with low risk patients
- I am dissatisfied with the long term booking which is necessary to have a blood test at the surgery.

**9a. Have you used the Watling Medical Centre Website/**

Yes	No
23%	77%

**9b. How useful have you found it?**

Very Useful	Useful	Not useful
28%	59%	13%

**Comment:** The majority of respondents had not used the website. 87% of those who had used it found it useful.

**10a. Do you know that you can request access to the following:**

**Your medical records at Watling Medical Centre?**

Yes	No
38%	62%

**The report from any hospital or health facility to which you have been referred?**

Yes	No
38%	62%

Comment; Most of the respondents were not aware of their right to access their medical records.

**10b. Would you want Watling Medical Centre to share your medical records with other health professionals and hospitals?**

Yes	No
68%	32%

Comments included the following;

- Yes, but just the hospital
- I feel my illness is private
- Yes generally, but not if it is requested by health insurance companies or other hospitals.
- No. I am worried about security. It could be going to Insurance Companies and other people that I would not want to have them.
- Unsure. I think it is a good idea for hospital consultants to have access but healthcare professionals covers a wide range of people. I am not sure if I am in favour of that.

**CONCLUSION**

Responses given in the survey indicated that on the whole, patients were satisfied with the provision made by Watling Medical Centre for them to access medical services. Their rating of the treatment provided by doctors was very high and they also indicated that they were generally very satisfied with the treatment provided at the clinics run by doctors and nurses. All other comments must be viewed with this in mind.

Patients expressed dissatisfaction over certain issues and these require attention e.g. booking appointments by telephone and the hours for which the surgeries are open.

The issue which caused the greatest annoyance was the difficulty which was experienced by patients when trying to book appointments by telephone. This is something which requires urgent attention, particularly so because booking appointments by telephone is by far the preferred choice of patients. This is followed by going to the Reception desk to make

appointments. What patients indicated that they valued most was the personal touch. Indeed the human contact seems to be much valued in different aspects of their access to treatment. They also wanted a quick response and a convenient method of making contact..

Although booking appointments online is a useful alternative and recognising that it has a valuable role to play, relying too much on this mode must be approached with caution, because of the preferences expressed by patients. Further, some patients may not consider online booking as an alternative which meets their needs e.g. some older patients (who probably require more appointments than others), those without access to a computer and those who cannot communicate adequately in English.

The preference which patients express for the methods of contact which maximise the personal touch may be linked to the fact that when people are feeling ill, and are to some extent feeling anxious or vulnerable, human contact may well be the beginning of the process of feeling that someone understands their problem and is doing something positive to help them get better.

A review of the length of the pre-recorded telephone message is also advisable. A simple, short and focussed message which gives patients the opportunity to select the service which they require may be all that is required. Otherwise there is a risk that patients who have clearly indicated their frustration when trying to get an appointment or test results etc may become even more irritated if instead of getting the service which they require, other information which they do not need at that moment, is being provided. It may be worthwhile to explore alternative mechanisms for transmitting other types of information to patients.

Patients also highlighted the fact that when they finally got through on the telephone, often it was only to be told that no more appointments were available. They pointed to some possible ways of reducing the occurrence of the problem. Extending opening hours and recruiting more doctors were options which they suggested. Such changes clearly have financial and human resource implications and may have to be done alongside the consideration of promoting other ways of providing medical services e.g. use of Minor Ailment Clinics and telephone consultations. The challenge will be to convince patients that any alternative avenue will be professionally sound and that the option of getting a face-to face consultation with a doctor will always remain an option even if they have been seen by someone else. This will require a sustained information - giving exercise.

The overall picture as reflected in responses to the Survey questions is that there is a high level of satisfaction with the way in which the WMC provides access to treatment for its patients. However areas in which patients have indicated that they see the need for change should be addressed.

