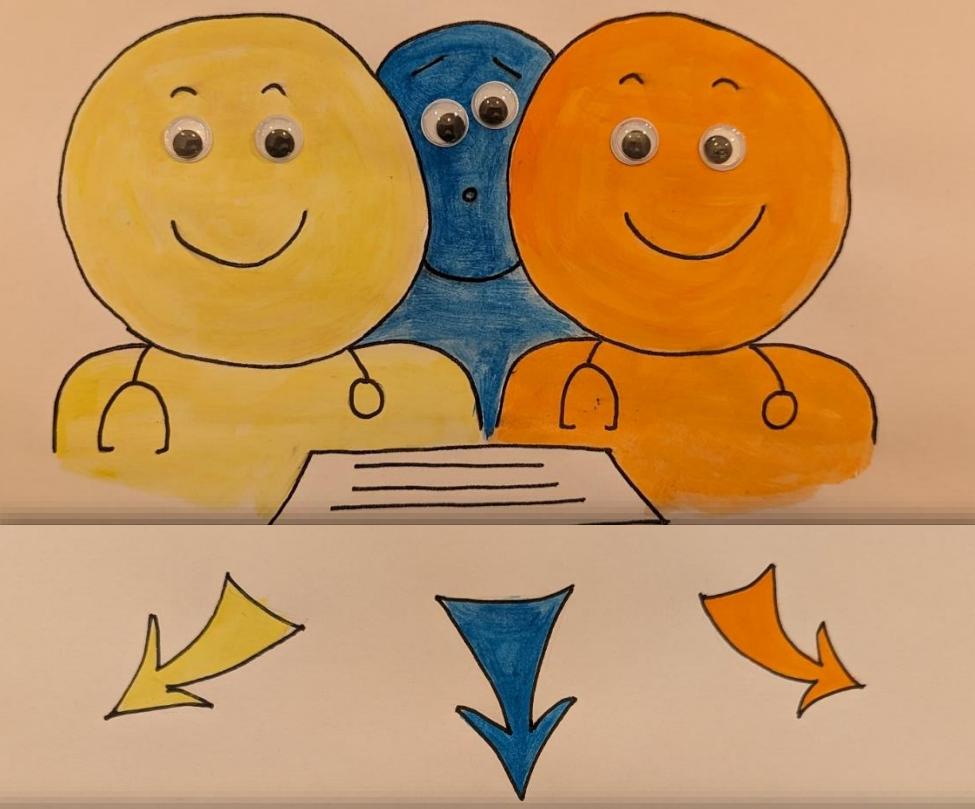




Writing to patients

Design of a study to support the rheumatology multidisciplinary team to write directly to patients





Please, write to
me. Writing
outpatient clinic
letters to
patients.
Guidance

03/09/2018

Cookies

Outpatient Clinic Letters: Clinically-led Specialty Outpatient Guidance

Letters following an outpatient appointment form an integral part of an outpatient attendance, providing valuable information on the consultation and the plan for the patient's ongoing management. They enable continuity of care within the provider, and as care is transferred/shared with colleagues in other specialities and primary care.

Outpatient clinic letters have at least three different audiences, each of which will have different requirements for what they need to be able to take from the contents. In view of this clinic letters must be clear, concise, in plain English and be structured with headings to allow quick and easy reference for all concerned. For patients, there should be an appreciation of their needs by considering adaptations e.g. those with visual impairment needing larger text in line with [Accessible Information standard](#)

Requirements

Patient / Carers

Patients often won't remember all that is discussed in clinic. The letter serves as a summary of their consultation to act as a reminder of what was discussed and what they can expect to happen next, or what they may need to do

- Letter written to patient with a copy to other healthcare professionals
- Avoidance of medical jargon and acronyms ensuring patients / carers can understand the

Features

Primary Care

In view of the high volume of letters these are primarily dealt with by admin, coders and pharmacy. Need to easily understand and identify information on any changes to the patient's diagnosis or management and any actions required by primary care

Summary of the key information that is structured and in plain English:

- Diagnoses (highlight any new ones)
- Changes to medication

Secondary / Tertiary Care

A summary of the care received to date and the patient's relevant history with a clear plan for the ongoing management to ensure that if the patient is seen by a different healthcare professional they are able to provide good continuity

- Significant past medical history (if not easily accessible through the electronic health record)

Guidance and information for secondary, community and mental health service staff

It means most patients aged 16 and over with online accounts (such as through the NHS App or other patient online apps) will automatically be able to view new (prospective) entries in their GP clinical record.

NHS
Digital

This will include information sent into general practice from secondary care and other providers to be added into the patient record, such as outpatient clinic letters, discharge summaries and other correspondence.

AOMRC – Guidance for outpatient clinic letters

Information Programme

Writing to patients from rheumatology

Supporting the rheumatology multidisciplinary team to write directly to patients

Phase 1: Scoping

Surveys

To establish patients' current understanding of rheumatology clinic letters and the terms used in these letters, and healthcare professional current clinic letter writing practice

Outputs

Knowledge of patients' current understanding of rheumatology terminology & current professional practice

Phase 2: Exploring

Interviews and focus groups

To understand patient and healthcare professionals' perspectives on clinic letters being written directly to patients, and their preferences regarding the content and structure of such letters

Outputs

Better understanding of patient and professional views on writing directly to patients

Phase 3: Co-producing resources

Co-production workshops

To co-produce guidance and other resources to support healthcare professionals to write clinic letters directly to patients in a way that is understandable and acceptable to patients

Outputs

Co-produced resources to support HCPs to write directly to patients, including example letters, training resources, patient materials

Impact on practice

Patient and public involvement and engagement

Relevance to primary care

- Prospective open access from 31st October
- Fewer requests to 'translate' secondary care letters
- Improved patient self-management
- Support shared decision-making
- Reinforce motivational conversations

Thank you



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