

Digital Outpatient Waiting List Validation

With lengthening hospital outpatient waiting lists it is essential to make sure they only include patients who still need to be seen. Belfast Trust currently validates these lists by posting out a form, which is returned to us for processing but we want to make this easier for patients and speed up the process.

We are trialling a new digital process, through which patients, for whom we have a mobile telephone number –more than 80% of all patients- can confirm whether they want to remain on a specified waiting list.

They will be contacted by SMS which includes a link and PIN code to be used in conjunction with their date of birth to securely access the validation letter and online form through a patient portal. This form will ask if they want to remain on the waiting list for the named specialty and also gives them the opportunity to update any of their personal details and capture an email address which can be used to access video consultations if appropriate to their care. Their responses are then submitted electronically.

Where a patient does not have a mobile telephone number, SMS delivery fails or if there is no response to the digital communication, the postal validation process will be triggered.

As with the current system, if there is no response, the patients will be contacted a second time by the appropriate method. Depending on responses, they will either be returned to or discharged from the waiting list. Their GP and referrer will be informed of any patient who is being discharged and may re-instate them on the list if required.

This initiative is initially being trialled in Dermatology and if successful will be scaled to validate all specialties. As the population become more comfortable with technology it is hoped this will enable our patients to engage with us quicker in a way that suits them and not only speed up the validation process but promote digital adoption for any future service developments.

Results on the effectiveness of the trial will be available in November 2021. Should you require further information, please contact Audrey.chada@belfasttrust.hscni.net