



Quarterly Report: Outpatient Direct Complaints

July - September 2007

Introduction

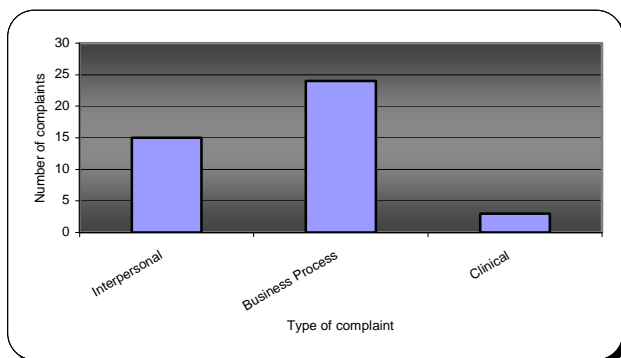
The Outpatient Direct (OPD) complaints process was developed to monitor and improve the effectiveness of outpatient reform processes relating to the Health Call Centre (HCC). The complaints process is designed to complement, not replace, existing processes within the HCC, hospitals and WA Health. OPD received a total of 31 complaints between July - September 2007. All complaints are assessed and mediation strategies or better business processes are developed. Complaints are categorised into three main groups: 1) business processes, 2) high risk clinical, and 3) interpersonal and communication.

Business Processes

In this quarter 77.4% of complaints were related to business processes. This figure increased by approximately 20% since the January - March 2007 quarter. Business processes not being followed correctly by the hospital clinic staff was the most frequently recorded complaint in this category. This significant increase in complaints may also partially be attributed to HCC staff experiencing frequent changes to business processes.

As the OPD program becomes further established and associated business processes become more streamlined with enhanced staff familiarity, complaints of this nature are likely to decrease.

Graph 1: OPD Complaints July - September 2007



High Risk Clinical

Three high risk clinical complaints were received during the July - September quarter. This represents 9.7% of all complaints, an increase of 3.2%. It initially seems alarming that clinical complaints have risen; however, due to the relatively small total number of complaints, one extra clinical complaint this quarter is proportionately larger.

The clinical complaints were as follows:

- 1) A patient was incorrectly categorised as DNA (Did Not Attend appointment) when they had actually phoned OPD to reschedule their appointment. The appointment was not rescheduled by the clinic as per protocol. A hospital project officer reiterated to clinic staff that Action Request reports must be checked vigilantly.
- 2) A 'high risk' appointment was cancelled and the referral was erroneously discharged by the HCC. This occurred as the patient had numerous appointments scheduled and an incorrect one was cancelled. All HCC staff have subsequently been coached in rescheduling procedures.
- 3) A patient was incorrectly advised by OPD that she did not require tests/investigations before her next appointment. The patient drove to Perth from Bunbury for an appointment which was consequently pointless because the necessary tests had not been performed prior to the appointment as requested by the doctor. The original call should have been warm transferred to the appropriate clinic. The customer service representative (CSR) involved has been coached and provided with further training. Patient has received a formal written apology.

OPD clinical processes at both the HCC and hospital level have been thoroughly reviewed to ensure such high risk clinical errors do not reoccur.



Communication and Interpersonal

This category covers a range of interpersonal matters such as customer service, interaction styles and strategies. This category accounted for 48.4% of the total number of complaints, an increase of 12.9% from the previous quarter. The main type of complaints received related to interpersonal interactions between hospital clinic and HCC staff. Complaints predominantly related to difficulties in transferring customer calls. Overall, since the inception of OPD, complaints related to poor professional behaviour have markedly reduced. Education and monitoring concerning a strong customer service focus continues in all work areas involved with OPD.

Overview

Although complaints in each category have risen since the previous quarter, overall, complaints this quarter have considerably reduced since the beginning of this year, and the beginning of the OPD program, and continue to be on a downward trend. Complaints this quarter have reduced by 67% since the January - March 2007 quarter.

One particular clinic had six complaints due to interpersonal issues concerning the hospital clinic clerk. Measures have been implemented to improve performance in the next quarter.

The remaining 25 complaints were all isolated incidents that occurred at different clinics across all sites.

A recent trend of erroneously rescheduled appointments is currently under review by the Health Call Centre and PDD. Staff coaching, improved work instructions and the imminent IT support tool are all strategies designed to reduce errors and ultimately complaints.