

The GP Patient Survey 2008

You may be aware through the press, TV, radio or internet that the government has published details of a survey it organised again this year of patients' experience of GP services. As a practice we do value communication with you – our registered patients – so we thought you might like to have some information about this survey.

What the survey asked

The full title of the survey was 'The GP Patient Survey – your doctor, your experience, your say'. Questionnaires were distributed in January 2008, in England only, and responses were due back in April 2008. This year the survey had two parts, one about access to GP services, and the other about whether patients had been offered a choice of hospital when GPs were making appointments for them. Patients were also asked about how satisfied they were with the hours their GP surgery was open.

Results

The headline results of the survey were as follows for England:

- The vast majority of patients (87%) were satisfied with how easy it was to get through to the practice on the telephone. This is a slight improvement from last year.
- 87% of patients said they were able to get an appointment within 48 hours. Again, this is a slight improvement from last year.
- 77% of people who wanted to book ahead for appointment with a doctor reported that they were able to do so. This, too, is a slight improvement on last year.
- 88% of those who wanted to see a particular doctor at their GP surgery were able to do so.
- In the main survey on hospital choice, 93% of patients who were referred to see a specialist and who completed the questionnaire said that their GP had talked with them about a choice of hospital.
- 82% of patients said that they were satisfied with the hours their GP surgery was open in the last six months. This did vary according to how old patients were, whether they worked and if so how far their workplace was from the practice, and how easy it was for them to take time off work. There were also differences according to which ethnic group patients came from.

The results from your practice

We are pleased to report that the results from this practice were as follows:

- 85% of people said that they were satisfied with their ability to get through to the surgery on the telephone, which is an improvement from last year.
- 85% of people who tried to get a quick appointment with a GP said they were able to do so within 48 hours, which is an improvement from last year.
- 76% of people who wanted to book ahead for an appointment with a doctor reported that they were able to do so, which is an improvement from last year.
- 81% of people who wanted an appointment with a particular doctor thought that they could have one, which is an improvement from last year.

- 76% of people said that they were satisfied with the current opening hours in the practice
- 88% of people who were referred to a specialist said, in responding to the specific survey on hospital choice, that their GP had discussed a choice of hospital with them.

Our views

We always welcome comments from our patients and hope that we give patients the opportunity to have their say about the service our practice provides, including how easy it is to see a doctor. We are still concerned that this national survey costs a lot of money, and asks questions that we feel can be misleading because they do not explain the implications of, for example, longer opening hours for other services, and of course for the GPs, nurses and other staff in the practice.

The results this year do show once again that the vast majority of patients are happy with the services we provide, and have confidence in general practice. UK general practice continues to deliver benefits to patients through the improved monitoring and treatment of acute and chronic health problems and the continued long-term and personal relationships we have with our patients.

We are also very grateful to all those people who signed our recent petition in support of UK general practice – in total, over one and a quarter million people signed and we very much value your support.

We and our practice team work very hard to act in the best interests of our patients and to provide a quality service for all and particularly those who need it most – those with chronic and serious illnesses, the very young, and the elderly. We hope that we have done our best to ensure that patients are able to make appointments at convenient times, whether this be for short-notice or non-urgent problems. With a limited number of appointments in one day, it can be difficult to get this balance right – but on the whole we think the results of the survey show that GPs are doing this well.

You may have seen in the press or on TV that there has been a lot of discussion about surgery opening times in recent months. This year's survey of access to GP services has been conducted before some recent new arrangements which have made it possible for many practices to offer more flexible opening times. We think that the fact that the results nevertheless demonstrate such high levels of satisfaction also shows that GPs are doing their best to provide what patients want.

You can access the full results of the survey on the NHS Choices website, at **www.nhs.uk**.