USE OF TEXT MESSAGING TO COLLECT REAL-TIME FEEDBACK FROM HEALTHCARE USERS ABOUT THE HEALTHCARE ENVIRONMENT

S Patel[1] and R Cain[1]

[1]WMG, University of Warwick, Coventry, UK

salma.patel@warwick.ac.uk, r.cain.1@warwick.ac.uk

Abstract

In this paper we propose the use of text messaging as a real-time technological method to collect feedback from healthcare users about the healthcare environment. Healthcare users (whether that is patients, carers, visitors or staff) will be offered the option to use a free text messaging service to give feedback about the cleanliness of the environment and food that is provided within the hospital.

I. INTRODUCTION

Lord Darzi argues in his review that for effective change in the NHS, patients need to be involved and 'empowered' in the decision making process [1]. When it comes to the improvement of healthcare environments, currently the NHS uses mainly paper based methods to collect patient feedback. However, the questions asked on these forms could be criticised for being too generic and feedback received lacks detail on specific issues [2]. Current feedback methods also exclude carers, visitors and staff, who can at times collectively be more in number in a healthcare setting than patients. Furthermore, as feedback is not received in real-time, it is usually out dated and can therefore lack credibility, hence changes based on patient feedback are less likely to be made [2]. It is for this reason the Department of Health announced that it requires every hospital trust to collect 'real-time' feedback from its patients [3].

II. METHODS

Users of the Royal Free Hospital will be able to give real-time feedback about the cleanliness of the environment and food provided within the hospital through the use of text messaging. Posters will be placed around the building promoting this service and will contain a short code that healthcare users could use to text their message to, as well as a keyword that represents the area they are in. An example of a similar type of poster used for the pilot study (conducted in an academic environment) is shown in Figure 1.

During the three month study period, the areas selected by the Patient Environment Team as 'problematic areas' will be divided into two zones. This is so that the text messaging option can be provided in one zone and results could then be compared to the zone which doesn't have the text messaging option.

II. RESULTS

The Patient Environment Team will respond immediately to the cleanliness feedback and make appropriate changes. The feedback on food will be used by the catering provider to make improvements to the quality of food provided in the hospital. After a user responds to the service, they will also be given the option to give feedback about their experience of using the text messaging service.

FIGURE I
EXAMPLE OF A POSTER ASKING FOR FEEDBACK THROUGH TEXT MESSAGING ABOUT THE ENVIRONMENT

II. DISCUSSION

The effectiveness of the use of text messaging as a real-time feedback tool will be analysed by comparing response rates, quality of responses and improvement rates to existing methods, as well as evaluating through a semi structured interview how healthcare users, the Patient Environment Team and the catering provider perceive such an intervention

II. CONCLUSIONS

This study will evaluate whether using text messaging is an effective way to involve users in the improvement of the healthcare environment. It will also contribute towards creating best practice guidelines for the NHS.

REFERENCES

[1]   Department of Health, *High Quality Care For All*. 2008.
[2]   H. Brown, D. Davidson, and J. Ellins, "NHS West Midlands Investing for Health Real-time Patient Feedback Project Final Report," *Health Services Management*, no. January, pp. 1-124, 2009.
[3]   A. Coulter, R. Fitzpatrick, and J. Cornwell, *The Point of Care Measures of patients' experience in hospital : purpose, methods and uses*, no. July. The King's Fund 2009: , 2009, pp. 1-32.