Flexible, Effective, Dynamic Management in a Clinical Setting

Background
FPWA Sexual Health Services (formerly Family Planning WA) is a large non-government and not-for-profit organisation with its head office located in Northbridge, Western Australia (WA). Clinical Services and Roe ST Centre for human relationships counseling services occupy and operate on the ground floor of a two-storey building.

Northbridge is adjacent to Perth city, Perth railway station and surrounded by many back packer hostels, pubs, cafes, restaurants and several high profile night clubs. FPWA is conveniently situated in Perth city with employees and clients having easy access to all forms of transport, including trains, buses, taxis and cars. FPWA has operated this main clinical services from its head office for over 25 years.

In the past 10 years FPWA has become a significant service provider for sexual health services and plays an integral role in WA sexual health strategies for STIs and HIV. The gradual change in FPWA service focus has resulted in proactive promotion of sexual health clinical services to the general public, while engaging in several collaborations and strategies targeting MSM and heterosexual men.

FPWA runs the following courses for doctors and nurses:
1. Sexual and Reproductive Health Certificate
2. Intrauterine Device (IUD) training
3. Implanon training

All FPWA courses require trainees to undertake clinical training at the organisation.

Sexual Health Helpline (SHH) Staffing Strategy

The SHH is a telephone information and advice service, staffed by FPWA Advanced Practice Nurses (APN). Funded by the Department of Health, FPWA has provided the SHH service from Monday to Friday’s and even Saturdays for over 25 years.

In November 2007 a three-month trial was initiated to operate the SHH one day per fortnight from an APN’s residence. An evaluation of the off-site model found it to be cost neutral, an effective strategy to retain experienced and skilled nurses, no negative impacts on client satisfaction, no cost increases and the APN was extremely satisfied with the arrangement. Staffing the SHH with senior nurses in an industry environment filled with nursing shortages and aging workforce will always be a challenge. However, this off-site model of service delivery proves to be an attractive option for many nurses and can be readily and easily implemented.

Clinic Hours and Sessions – Flexibility of Hours for Staff

Clients are booked to see either an APN or a doctor. Traditionally, a clinic session has always been three and a half hours in length. Over the past two years clinical session times have become more flexible to accommodate the clinician’s personal and individual needs. Clinic sessions are now scheduled from a minimum of three hours to a maximum of five hours. Clinical Services has a mix of experienced clinicians qualified to deliver clinical education and newer clinicians.

Clinic Mix

The number of male clients attending Northbridge Clinical Services has slowly increased to 12 per cent of all clients seen in 2008 - 2009.

Waiting Lists – Strategies to Reduce the Waiting Time

1. In early 2007, clients waited on average six weeks to see a doctor and three weeks to see a nurse.
2. Unwanted Pregnancy outcomes counseling appointments were scheduled at the end of each doctor’s session.
3. A single ‘Emergency’ client appointment was included in each doctor’s session.
4. In 2008 doctor appointments could not be made more than four weeks in advance. IUD insertions are the exception to this four week rule.
5. Clients are encouraged to call four weeks before their intended date to see a doctor.
6. This strategy enables clients to book and secure an appointment at a convenient time and has improved the attendance rate.

Clients Not Attending Their Appointment

Clients not attending their appointments are recorded as DNA but this does not include clients ringing to cancel or reschedule an appointment. DNA has numerous implications and impacts to staff, the organisation.

Strategies to Reduce DNAs

Analysis of DNA rates during 2007 were highest on:
1. Saturday mornings
2. before and after the Easter long weekend
3. before and after the FPWA Christmas holiday closure from 24 December until the first business day in January of the New Year

Based on this analysis, several strategies were trialed in an attempt to reduce the DNA rate:
1. Same-day appointments for the last two to three days prior to the Christmas holiday break with nurses
2. Same-day appointments for the first two to three days back to work after the Christmas holiday break with nurses
3. Bookings not taken more than four weeks in advance for any doctors. The exception to the rule being IUD insertions
4. Make same-day appointments.

Summary
It is possible to effectively respond to the individual needs of both clients and staff. It requires the manager to be flexible and responsive to personal shift requests and changing trends within the clinic. Looking at creative workplaces, such as the off site SHH telephone service can mean the difference between retaining and losing highly skilled staff.

Reducing waiting lists for clients improves attendance rates, while same-day appointments accommodate some client needs for an immediate appointment to deal with urgent issues.

Reduced DNA rates means improved output for the organisation, greater teaching opportunities for trainees, and most importantly happier clients and staff.

Most Recent Initiatives

1. Collaboration between FPWA main switchboard staff and Clinical Services to manage an overloaded system on Monday mornings and after Public Holiday breaks.
2. Same-day appointments are allocated for a doctor and nurse each Friday afternoon and Tuesday afternoon.
3. New computerised administration and clinical records system, allows for SMS appointment reminders to all clients.

Outcomes From All Initiatives

1. SHH is held off-site two days per fortnight, retaining skilled staff who would have otherwise left FPWA
2. Clients requiring immediate urgent attention are more easily able to be accommodated
3. Clinical trainees have a full and comprehensive clinical learning experience
4. The DNA rate is monitored regularly with the rate stabilising after initial significant reductions
5. Client numbers are increasing
6. FPWA clinicians are consistently busy in their clinics
7. Administration staff are content as they can respond to client needs for immediate appointments
8. No increase in clinic running costs

Changes Implemented as a Result of Evaluation Findings

1. No pathology results appointments are booked for the first two days after public holidays
2. Ensure extra staff are rostered on the first morning back to manage bookings line/overflow
3. Inform and prepare FPWA main switchboard staff of what is happening in the clinic

Evaluation of DNA strategies

1. Same-day appointments were introduced to all nurses for pre and post Christmas break 2007 - 08
2. A highly effective strategy in reducing the DNA rate, but some errors were made:
   a. Booking clients for results on the first day after the Christmas holiday allowed no time for the pathology nurse to call all received pathology against sent pathology in the Pathology Register
   b. No extra staff on duty to answer the bookings line/overflow

   Appointments made in December for the first morning back to work in January had a good show rate but the few afternoon appointments made were DNA

   FPWA’S main switchboard was overwhelmed with calls, and staff were not aware of the clinic strategy

Results

Same-day appointment DNA decreases were dramatic as seen in the following table and graphs.

Monthly DNA Rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day and Date</th>
<th>Patients booked with Doctor</th>
<th>Patients booked with APN</th>
<th>DNA and % of total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jan 08</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar 08</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 08</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jul 08</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sep 08</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Saturday DNA Rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day and Date</th>
<th>Patients booked with Doctor</th>
<th>Patients booked with APN</th>
<th>DNA and % of total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jan 09</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr 09</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jul 09</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sep 09</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 09</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Contact Details

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Thanks are in order to all FPWA Clinical Services staff who have been open, willing to change and explore new options for the creation of a dynamic exciting workplace that is client-centred.