

Simple telehealth across a range of applications: service evaluation of user satisfaction

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Background

- The Advice & Interactive Messaging (AIM) for Health programme comprised 10 clinical protocols which utilised a simple telehealth system ('Flo') to enable primary care patients across England to take responsibility for the monitoring and dual management of their own long-term condition(s), treatment, or lifestyle and to enhance patient experience of their management
- Protocols addressed hypertension (HTN, diagnosis/management), adult and child inhaler/medication reminders and smoking cessation

Aim

To undertake a service evaluation to establish the user satisfaction with a mobile phone-based, simple telehealth intervention, introduced in March 2013 and used across a range of applications across a national primary care population

Methods

Patient feedback	Professional user feedback	Analysis
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2304/3381 patients (68%) registered on an AIM protocol were invited to respond ('agree' or 'disagree') to "I would recommend this service to my family and friends" For protocols lasting longer than one month, the adapted friends and family question was asked monthly Denominators reflect the number of patients sent the evaluative texts each month 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invitations to provide feedback were emailed to professional users in Summer 2013 and Spring 2014 Three groups of professional users were sent different electronic surveys: clinicians (Clin), clinical leads (CL), clinical telehealth facilitators (CTF) Electronic surveys each contained 5 attitude statements that mapped on to the programme aims and free text comment boxes inviting positive and negative feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All professional responses relating to the AIM programme in general, rather than specific protocols were extracted Feedback was summarised using descriptive statistics and free text comments underwent thematic analysis (1) Patient responses compared with a pre-project aspiration: ≥80% of responding patients agree with the adapted friends and family question

Results

1707/2304 (74%) of patients sent evaluative texts responded at least once

Agreement with the adapted friends and family test exceeded pre-project aspirations after each month of use:

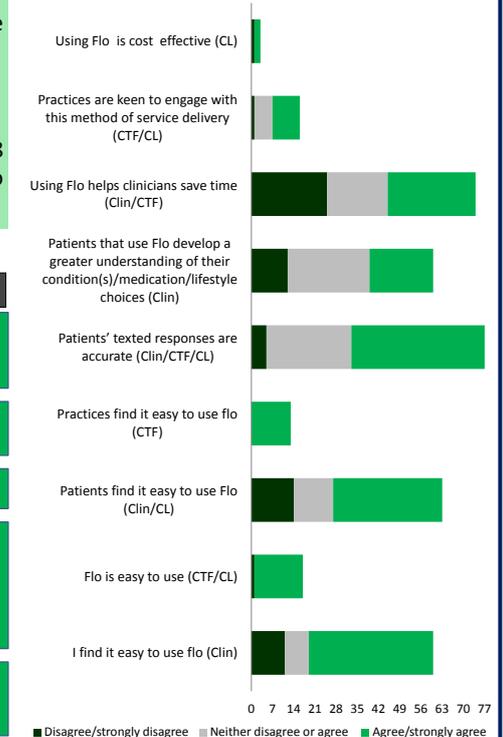
- 95% (1497/1583) at the end of month 1 (or week 1 for the HTN diagnosis protocol)
- 93% (392/424) at the end of month 2
- 89% (165/185) at the end of month 3

77 professional users responded in total after both evaluation rounds:

- Clin n=60 (GPs n=21, nurses n=17, healthcare assistants n=12, other n=10)
- CTF n=14
- CL n=3

14 respondents could not give a negative comment, 8 could not give a positive comment and 4 gave no free text comments

Professional user feedback to electronic survey attitude statements (group asked)



Summary of themes emerging from professional user feedback to free text evaluative questions

What could be improved	Themes	What went well
Doubt the educational value	Puts patients in control of their health	Encouraged patients to acknowledge, take responsibility for and feel involved in their health problems/management
Time not saved due to patient set-up time and anxieties, problems receiving texts, reviewing data and patients not returning equipment		Saved (nurses and GP) appointments, patients' time/inconvenience and resources
Patients and professional users struggled with Flo and equipment. Cross-cover was problematic	Use of appointments	Patients and professional users found Flo easy
Patients not interested or anxious, responses fail/unreliable, no mobile reception. Professional users saw little benefit over traditional methods, found the system complex/increased work and wanted direct integration with patient records and to track patients after protocol end	Ease of use	Patients are happy, interested, and value the feedback and flexibility. Professional users liked the flexibility of managing patients remotely, being able to send simple messages and having readings on record
More support at the practice level to launch the service and educate staff about its use (e.g. leaflets). Tardy Read code details	Acceptability of the system	Valued initial briefing session and demos, case studies, examples of how others are using Flo and the patient pack
	Support using the system	

Implications for the future

- Satisfaction with AIM appeared maximal when patients were carefully selected for the protocol, professional users were familiar with the system and the programme addressed a problem or gap in previous service delivery that was identified by users
- Evaluative texts were not sent if protocols were amended to omit them or if patients stopped using the intervention early. The latter may include those dissatisfied with AIM. However valuable insights about the strengths and issues of this national programme were obtained
- Future applications of AIM, or similar interventions, may be optimised by providing a choice of response methods, prompts for clinicians, direct integration with electronic patient records and enhanced support during early implementation of the service