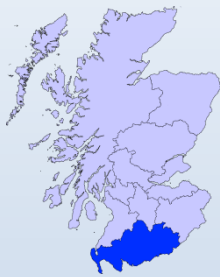


# Patient Perceptions of Remote Consultations in Dumfries & Galloway: How best to integrate video and telephone consultations into our outpatient services post-COVID?

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## Introduction

- Remote consultations (telephone and NearMe video call appointments) were rolled out across Dumfries & Galloway Royal Infirmary secondary care outpatients as a way of conducting appointments safely during COVID-19.
- Dumfries & Galloway is a large, sparsely populated, area; many of its population live >1hour's drive from the only acute care hospital.
- Dumfries & Galloway has the oldest average age in Scotland and some of the lowest digital literacy<sup>1</sup>.
- Remote consultations have proposed benefits including increased convenience and accessibility, patient and Health Board cost savings, and reduced carbon footprint.



NHS NearMe QR link

## Aims

- Provide a patient-centred service;
- Identify patients likely to benefit from remote consultations;
- Identify barriers and map challenges facing patients.

## Methods

In January 2021, a closed-response questionnaire was sent to 3000 patients, or carers, who received NearMe or telephone appointments for all specialities in Dumfries & Galloway Royal Infirmary, in July 2020.

## Results

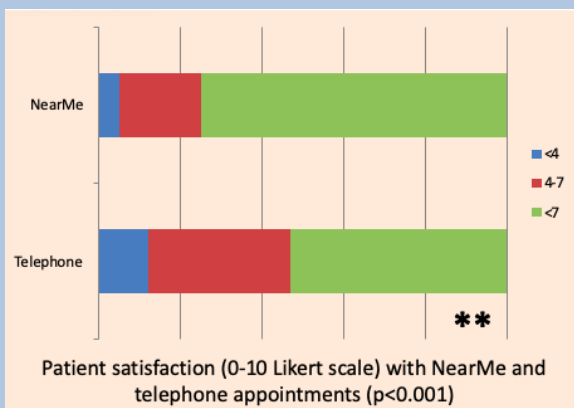
553 survey responses were analysed.

Patients were overwhelmingly >60 years of age (68%), with 50.5% identifying as male and 49.3% as female.

76.5% exclusively used telephone for their appointment, with only 20.6% exclusively using NearMe.

### Who benefits from remote consultations?

Satisfaction was greater amongst those participating in a NearMe appointment (Chi square 15.82, p<0.001).

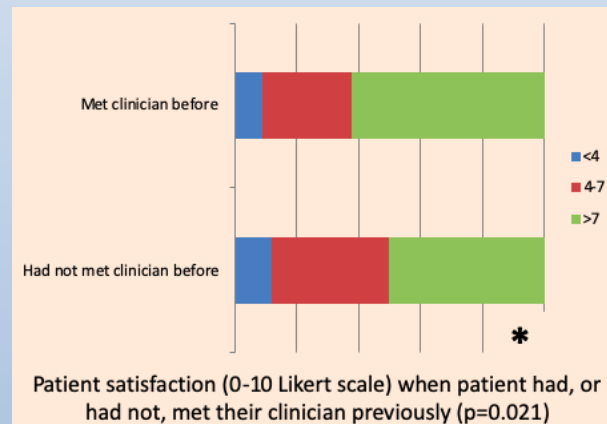


Modality of remote consultation:

- was correlated with age (Chi-square = 58.40, p <0.001), with older patients much more likely to have a telephone consultation;
- was related to employment status (Chi-square = 33.36, p=0.001), with those in full-time education more likely to participate in a NearMe appointment (51.9%);
- bore no relation to gender (Chi-square = 7.44, p=0.114).

Greater satisfaction was reported when a patient had met their clinician before (Chi-square = 7.74 for satisfaction score >7, p=0.021).

Data were insufficient to determine whether specialty affected patient satisfaction with remote consultations.



Greater satisfaction was reported when the appointment was a return, but the difference was not significant (Chi-square = 4.51, p=0.105).

Travel time to a hospital appointment (F = 1.445-0.585) p=0.237-0.558) and whether the patient would usually travel to their appointment by car (Chi-square = 1.064, p = 0.587), were not related to patient satisfaction with remote consultation. Over 79.5% of patients would normally travel to their hospital appointment by car.

### What barriers to remote consultations do our patients face?

Access to IT equipment and perceived IT literacy were related to satisfaction with remote consultations.

#### "Do you feel you have adequate computer skills to work NearMe remote consultations?"

Those who answered 'yes' were more likely to score highly for satisfaction (Chi-square = 30.52 for satisfaction score >7, p<0.001), regardless of remote consultation modality they participated in.

Patients who had access to a tablet (Chi-square = 6.59, p=0.037) or had used video calls (Chi-square = 9.02, p=0.011) or NHS NearMe before (Chi-square = 12.72, p=0.002) reported greater satisfaction with remote consultations.



I found it excellent, especially NearMe as I hadn't met the consultant.

example patient comment

"Did you feel you could get your concerns and questions across during the consultation?"

**76.4%** agreed

"Do you feel that all of your concerns were addressed appropriately during the remote consultation?"

**72.4%** agreed

"Did you feel that you had more privacy to express your situations in a remote consultation setting?"

**33.9%** agreed

"Did you feel the professional relationship was more difficult due to not being face to face?"

**33.0%** agreed

"Do you feel that the lack of an opportunity to be examined impacted on the care you received?"

**28.5%** agreed

### Can we identify those more likely to benefit from remote consultations?

Users of remote consultations were highly likely to accept the same modality of remote consultation again. NearMe users were more likely to both prefer and recommend a remote consultation again.

Would you:	Had telephone consultation n=95	Had NearMe consultation n=104
Accept telephone again?	313 [79.2%]	49 [47.1%]
Accept NearMe again?	93 [23.5%]	93 [89.4%]
Prefer telephone in future?	187 [47.3%]	24 [23.1%]
Prefer NearMe in future?	53 [13.4%]	66 [63.5%]
Recommend remote consultations to others?	225 [57.0%]	83 [79.8%]

\* p<0.05 \*\* p<0.001

## Conclusions

- The patient most likely to benefit from a remote consultation has had one before, has met their clinician before and self-reports adequate IT skills.
- NearMe consultation users reported higher satisfaction than telephone users, but they make up just over a fifth of all remote consultations.
- Fewer NearMe calls were offered to, or taken up by, older patients, indicating an age disparity in terms of access.
- Future work should address improving patients' IT confidence and understanding why offer or uptake of NearMe appointments is less than telephone appointments, particularly in the older age groups who make up the majority of our secondary care outpatient population.

## Limitations

- Some patients may have given satisfaction scores based on the COVID situation that are not reflective of their feelings about remote consultations in general.
- Clinician perceptions of remote consultations and clinician perceived IT skills may influence when remote consultations are offered to patients, and these were not studied.
- The clinical effectiveness of remote consultations has not been studied here, hence cost saving analysis on repeat presentations cannot be calculated.
- A recall bias may exist due to time lapse of 6 months between appointment and questionnaire.

## References

- The Tech Partnership. Digital Heatmap. <http://heatmap.thetechpartnership.com/?area=Dumfries%20&%20Galloway&metric=skills> (accessed 07/04/2021)
- Map showing extent of NHS(Scotland) Dumfries and Galloway region. Wikipedia [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/NHS\\_Dumfries\\_and\\_Galloway#/media/File:NHSdumgal.png](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/NHS_Dumfries_and_Galloway#/media/File:NHSdumgal.png) (accessed 19/05/2021)

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