



➔ CASE STUDY: The Royal Free Hospital, Hampstead

➔ We prescribed a solution to improve the way the Royal Free Hospital communicates with patients

The Royal Free Hospital was founded in 1828 to provide free hospital care to those who could not afford treatment. The title 'Royal' was granted by Queen Victoria in 1837 in recognition of the hospital's work with cholera victims. It now specialises in cancer, neurosciences, HIV and liver, kidney and bone marrow transplantation.

Patients were queuing to make an appointment at the GUM Clinic

Patients needing to make an appointment for treatment in the Hospital's Sexual Health Clinic were reporting a queue of up to 20 people waiting at any one time to contact the Genito-Urinary Medicine (GUM) and Sexual Health clinics to arrange to see a Doctor.

Genito-Urinary Medicine (GUM) and Sexual Health clinics specialise in the management and treatment of Sexually Transmitted Diseases. These busy clinics also provide Chlamydia screening and

Family Planning Services. Department of health Directives requires the clinic to offer all patients appointments within 48 hours.

A text appointment system

The Royal Free deployed the services of Softcare Medical, a London based software developer and Healthcare Management Services Company to provide a text based appointment system to automate the appointment making process. This would enable the automatic booking of appointments over a 48 hour period. The system, which

uses ProcessFlows' Text Message Server solution, operates in one of two ways:

■ Manually operated 24 Hour booking service

Operated by call centre and or text message, the system can provide a comprehensive booking service for all future appointments. Appointments may be booked by phone call, text message or by a browser interface. Booked appointments and available slots are uploaded from the system to the clinic software each half day.



■ **Automated out of hours booking service**

The service operates when the clinic is closed by making available slots over the following 48 hours period available by SMS booking or via a web browser. Booked appointments and available slots are uploaded from the system to the clinic software at the start and end of each working day.

■ **Dedicated text numbers for different clinics and services**

The Template GUM system supports touch screen attendance recording and registration by patients.

Patients are given a specific number to text and all SMS text messages go to these dedicated numbers. This

means that all data is able to be monitored and statistics produced on demand for the Department of Health. Individual dedicated numbers indicate different clinics and services, making them easy to identify.

Callers are offered three appointments over a 48 hour period by text. The patient is able to respond and select the most convenient appointment. The caller's number is used to generate a temporary patient reference number and the appointment is simultaneously confirmed by text with a booking reference. When the patient attends the clinic, the patient number and booking reference is able to be confirmed.

Text is quick and confidential

With the assistance of ProcessFlows and Computer Communications Limited, a local solutions provider, the Hospital has been able to successfully address the issue using SMS technology. A client server solution such as Text Message Server offers a convenient, fast and cost effective means of Text Messaging communication.

Coupled with the benefits of being popular and always available, text messaging is very user friendly and is the preferred method of communication for many people, plus it is also totally confidential and accurate.