

Near Me in General Practice – Good Practice Flash Report August 2022



Near Me is a video consulting service. At the onset of covid-19, there was a rapid scale up of Near Me in general practice, however, since May 2020, use in general practice has declined significantly. Recognising that adoption is heavily influenced by the culture and systems within individual practices, we conducted a deep dive to identify the spread of use and explore how it has been embedded in three of the highest using practices. This flash report summarises the findings from our interviews with GPs in these practices, and hopes to spark conversation about how the offer of consulting by Near Me can grow nationally.

What we learned

Approximately **30%** of the patient consultations were by Near Me

All have integrated scheduled video appointments via Near Me

97% patients report that they would use it again.

All rooms in the practices are set up with equipment to hold a video consultation, including the receptionist

Appointment slots were either dedicated Near Me appointments or flexible telephone or Near Me appointments.

The receptionists promote the use of Near Me to patients when booking appointments

The receptionists have a vital role in supporting patients to use Near Me

Blended model using Near Me, Telephone and in-person.
Very small use of e-Consult

Near Me enabled continuity of service while GPs were isolating with covid.

Patients felt better able to describe their problem using Near Me than try to explain on the phone.

The Near Me functionalities used included:

- Third and fourth parties being able to join the call
- Joint assessments with a Nurse Practitioner, in person with the patient.
- Chat function and screen sharing
- Close ups using phone/iPad rear facing cameras.

Where Near Me was found to work particularly well

- Patients presenting with mental health problems. Having sight of their surroundings and appearance can aid clinical decision-making.
- Situations where it is helpful to include carers and family members in discussions, especially if related to the ongoing care and maintenance of a condition.
- Long-term condition management.
- Medication reviews enable the pharmacist to have a visual of the medication packaging, as patients may not always explain medications correctly over phone.
- Occupational health appointments.
- Assessment of children. Being able to see them in their home environment aids decision-making.
- Patients with complex health conditions, such as elderly patients.
- Patients in care homes
- Neurological presentations as Near Me enables clinicians to see movements.

What are the enablers to embedding Near Me in General Practice?

- Clinical & strategic leadership.
- Reception staff being fully involved in the process.
- Scheduled Near Me appointments
- Consistently offering Near Me. The more it is offered the more it is used and with that a growth in patient confidence.
- Consult Now's role in supporting enhanced triage.

What are the barriers?

- Appetite for change
- GP time & capacity to technically support patients.
- Equipment not always available
- Lack of confidence in technical & digital skills.
- Near Me being viewed as a "resource for Covid 19".
- Assumptions about Patient expectation
- Legacy of formal medical training
- Perceived medico-legal legal considerations.

What are the key opportunities?

- Potential to increase clinical capacity & working flexibility by enabling clinicians to work from home and other settings.
- Joint consultations with secondary care specialists
- Time can be saved trying to get hold of patients on the telephone and making call backs. Instead the patient can be waiting in the Near Me waiting area.
- Near Me is genuinely "face to face" as no mask are required.

Going Forward

- Near Me is a valuable additional resource which offers greater choice in how patients access services in general practice.
- Near Me has a role in improving workflow and staff capacity
- Near Me is not appropriate for all patients and all situations but should be offered as a choice.
- Patients report that Near Me saves time, travel and the associated costs.
- The new Group Consulting functionality presents opportunities for the management of long term conditions and multidisciplinary / multi agency meetings where the patient or patient representative joins.
- Consult Now is available on existing Near Me waiting areas and enables swift transition from phone to video call.

For more information

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