



Surgery Line

NETWORK EUROPE GROUP

Speedy access gains praise at Cathedral

The Cathedral Medical Group is situated in the city of Chichester, under the control of Western Sussex PCT. As well as serving a bustling city population, they also cover a rural area with an approximate 8 mile radius. Their 46 staff, including 10 doctors, 2 health visitors and 9 community nurses, have a mixed patient base covering all socio economic classes, although they do cater for more elderly patients than the national average.

One of the reasons that the practice was initially interested in Surgery Line was because of the problems that patients had identified when calling in to the surgery. Too often patients said that they were hearing the engaged tone and were forced to make repeated calls in order to get through.

“the inflow of calls is more organised, resulting in a less stressful atmosphere for my team”

With 95% of GP's phone lines engaged at 9am in the morning, it is a common complaint. For Cathedral, this problem often cropped up during the regular satisfaction surveys and Siri Knott, Executive



Cathedral Medical Centre, situated on Cawley Road

Manager, decided to investigate ways to overcome this recurring problem.

“We recognised that we needed to do something to cure the bottleneck of calls - we knew that to address the problem we needed to expand our phone system to include additional direct dial numbers for staff. We wanted a queuing facility for patients and the ability to direct patients through to the right department. We also wanted staff to be able to log out from their station and to receive voicemail. The cost of purchasing what we needed wasn't



Reception Manager, Hilary Bailey

practical, so we were intrigued by the solution that Surgery Line offered us. After the initial meeting with NEG, we had reservations. It was a big change for

us: a long term commitment and a big upheaval to change the number. However, within a few of weeks we had weighed up the pros and cons, and there was little doubt that choosing Surgery Line was the best way to serve the needs of our patients and the practice with the funding available," says Siri.

"Surgery Line has helped to redistribute our incoming calls"

The Surgery Line system was installed in June 2004. "We did have concerns about how patients would react to the new number, but in fact, eight months down the line, we have had less than 10 queries out of our 12,000 patient base.

Most patients appreciate that it is now far easier to call the surgery and they are delighted that they can get through straight away," says Siri. "Even at peak times they are happier to queue for a few minutes rather than re-dialling, only to hear the engaged tone again.

Hilary Bailey, the Reception Manager, comments "The reception team are happy with the new system. With patients placed in a queue, and a built in pause between calls for recording messages etc, the inflow of calls is more organised, resulting in a less stressful atmosphere for my team."

Despite worries that patients would complain about the automated call handling, in the case of Cathedral Medical Centre, less than 0.067% had concerns about the change. "Whenever anything new is introduced, there will always be people who are unhappy. However, with all the benefits the system has brought, I'm glad that this very small minority didn't stop us from going ahead with a system that has helped so many people" says Karen Sallis, Assistant Practice Manager.

"Surgery Line has helped to redistribute our incoming calls. Patients are encouraged to ring at less busy times if they find they are at the end of a long queue, or if they are ringing about something non-urgent. With so many staff now having their own direct number, receptionists can concentrate on calls from patients. We are happy with the system and have found the support staff at NEG readily available and helpful."

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Chichester Cathedral

Cathedral Medical Centre's Top five reasons for going ahead with Surgery Line:

1. A more efficient system enabled us to introduce telephone appointments
2. Patients being put in a queue and not getting an engaged signal.
3. Individual voice mail.
4. Ability to expand the system.
5. Ability to analyse our telephone use.

Siri sums up by saying "We are very pleased with the new system. It has fulfilled most of the promises. Both patients and staff have seen major improvements and I'm happy to recommend it - and regularly do - to other surgeries."

What is Surgery Line?

"Surgery Line is a cost-effective way for forward looking surgeries to improve the service that they offer to patients, reduce stress levels for staff and self-fund a state of the art phone system," explains NEG's CEO, Richard Chapman. "As you can see, this case study focuses on one of the hundreds of surgeries that have already switched to Surgery Line. By doing so, they have saved money, improved the service that they offer patients and relieved the pressure on busy staff."

You and your staff benefit

When a surgery switches to an 084 number, NEG will install and maintain the most efficient communications system on the market. You specify exactly what equipment you want to receive (from handsets to switchboards) for no extra charge. With your own 084 number, you keep about 2p from every call to re-invest in your practice, instead of BT making all the profit from calls to your surgery.

How your patients benefit

Patients benefit by having their calls answered more quickly. The engaged tone becomes rare – even at peak times – because you are able to handle incoming calls more efficiently whilst patient calls are spread out during the day. Calls to 084 or 'lo-call' numbers cost patients 4p per minute, the same as the first minute of BT's standard call rate between 6am and 6pm. This means that many patients will actually pay less in total because their call is answered and processed more quickly. Significantly, the cost of calls from mobiles remains unchanged - these account for around 30% of all calls to surgeries.

The phone system that won't test your patients

"I've met a number of practice managers who think that Surgery Line sounds almost too good to be true," says Chapman, "but after it's been installed, they realise that NEG delivers everything we promise, and more."

Surgery Line

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For more information on how the Surgery Line system can help you visit www.networkeuropegroup.com or call

0800 096 86 26

