

*"Patient Partner from Voice Connect has been specifically developed to solve day to day communications problems experienced in General Practice. An elegant, cost effective solution that benefits patients and staff alike"*

# Nuffield Road Medical Centre finds that the Patient Partner 'risk' really pays off



*Using the Patient Partner system turned out to be less of a gamble and more of a safe bet for the surgery*

Nuffield Road Medical Centre ([www.nrmc.nhs.uk](http://www.nrmc.nhs.uk)) is a busy practice which serves the north west area of the city of Cambridge, including several of the surrounding villages. Built in 1995, the centre has over 11,000 residents on its register, with a high proportion of elderly patients. With list numbers rising and in order to meet recent service developments, the practice extended the building in 2005-2006. Nuffield Road currently has 12 doctors and 30 staff in a range of clinical and administrative roles.

Improving patient access has been made a major priority for GP surgeries over the past few years through a range of government initiatives. However, like many practices of all sizes and demographics across the UK, staff at Nuffield Road found that it was sometimes difficult for patients to get through on the phone at busy times of day. The Partners and Practice Manager at the surgery felt that using an automated appointments system could be an effective way of tackling

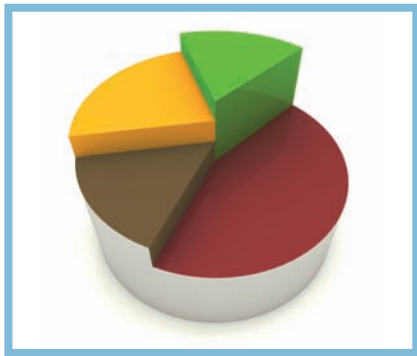
the issue and improving patient access. Having looked at Patient Partner, they decided to install the system, going live in November 2008.

## Confounding reservations, living up to expectations

Greta Evans, Practice Manager at Nuffield Road Medical Centre explains that they did have some reservations before installing the system. "We were unsure initially whether Patient Partner would offer us value for money, but having used the system for the past six months, we feel that the system has well and truly lived up to the expectations that we had. The staff at Voice Connect have been excellent – they are always helpful and any issues that crop up are dealt with promptly in a very professional manner."

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Being able to use the system to analyse statistics has proved to be very useful for the practice

Greta also reports that the uptake from patients has steadily increased as the system becomes more familiar and word spreads. "Strangely we have had little feedback from patients, but as the usage of Patient Partner is increasing all the time, our patients appear to like it and find it useful."

Patient Partner has had a positive impact upon both communication and patient experience at the centre. "Call congestion at peak times has definitely reduced," comments Greta. "Whilst we still encounter very busy times, it was so much more pressured prior to installing the automated system. Patient Partner also makes it easier for our patients to contact the surgery. We offer an appointment system based on the advance access way and release the appointments for booking on the day the night before. Patients can therefore book anytime from 8pm which saves them queuing or encountering the engaged tone when the centre opens in the morning."

Greta also feels that the system has helped with releasing additional time for the receptionists to get on with other important tasks associated with patient care and administration.

Patient Partner's top three features:

- 1. Patients are able to access appointments out of hours.**
- 2. It doesn't add to workload and frees up time for receptionists.**
- 3. The system has been reliable and easy to manage.**

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In addition, Greta reports that Patient Partner has been particularly helpful in dealing with less satisfied patients as they can use the system out of hours. This means that they don't have to be around the telephone to call at 8.30am, offering increased flexibility. Greta also feels that the system has contributed to increased levels of patient satisfaction. "Basically, Patient Partner is a really valuable resource that was painless to set up and to run. We did have some reservations at the beginning, but it was a good risk to take and I would not want to lose it now," explains Greta. "Any system that reduces the number of calls that reception staff have to handle must be a plus. If a surgery was in a similar position and was considering switching to the system I would advise them to go for it – the advantages of Patient Partner really are Practice Manager friendly."



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