

PATIENT ONLINE
SAFE ACCESS TO ONLINE
RECORDS CASE STUDY



THE BENEFITS OF ONLINE TEST RESULTS

The Swan Practice in Buckingham started offering online test results to their patients in August 2015. 1,200 patients are now signed up for this service, which is saving the admin and clinical team lots of time and phone calls.



With almost 20,000 patients and two sites, the practice is a busy one. To help their patients find out more about their own health, the Swan Practice decided to open up test results online. “We do about 50 tests every day, most of them are blood tests,” says practice nurse Helen. Previously, patients would ring up reception 5 days later to find out about the results, or book a follow-up appointment with

their GP or nurse. “When I take blood from a patient, I now tell them they can also go online to find out their results, as soon as they have been viewed by their GP. Most of the patients are pleasantly surprised this is possible and are keen to do so.”

To trial online access to test results, the practice decided to open it up to a selected group of patients first. “We initially only offered it to patients when they came in for their test results,” GP Rebecca says. “The take-up was good and we are now offering it to all patients who register. It is nice to see that patients are really using this online service, and our stats show that 70 to 120% of patients with access are viewing their results online.” Stats higher than 100% mean that patients have consulted their online results more than once.

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Less calls to the practice

Offering online test results has decreased the practice's workload. "As a GP, I can add a comment to the online test results if I want, explaining what it all means so patients know what to do next and don't have to call me," Rebecca says. "We find that since August, less people are ringing in the morning when it's busy to find out their results or what they mean. As a result our receptionists don't have to engage in a clinical conversation, when trying to clarify the results." Many patients now go online to find out about their results, rather than ring the practice.

A week's worth of monitoring phone calls showed that:

- the practice does approximately 50 tests in an average day, which equals the potential for 50 follow-up phone calls from patients wanting to know their results.
- each phone call takes approximately 2 minutes, but can take longer if a patient wants additional information.



The figures in the table below are based on an average of 3 minutes per call and the assumption that all patients ring the practice to find out their results.

Before online services	Average minutes per day	After online services (this is the number of calls the practice say they do receive)	Minutes per day	Potential minutes per day saved	Potential hours per week saved	Potential hours per year saved	Potential days (based on 8 hr day) saved per year
50 x 3 minute calls (average)	150	25 x 3 minute calls	75	75	6.25	325	40.6
Or with 10% reduction applied based on assumption that not all patients follow up with a phone call = 45 x 3 minute calls (average)	135	25 x 3 minute calls	75	60	5	260	32.5
Or even a 30% reduction = 35 x 3 minute calls	105	25 x 3 minute calls	75	30	2.5	130	16.25



Revolution in self-care

Patients consulting their test results online are encouraged to visit websites such as labtestsonline.org.uk to find out more. “We have a section on our website and in our patient leaflet that informs patients about online test results and where to go for more information,” Rebecca says. For instance ‘result is satisfactory’ means that the GP has looked at the test result and deemed it close to what was expected for the particular patient and requires no further action. ‘Doctor to contact patient’, means that the GP wishes to explain the results and / or further treatment or investigations may be necessary. “Online test results are convenient for patients who come in for the one-off test and want a quick reply as well as for patients with long term conditions, who want to delve in the results a bit more and follow-up their illness. It has revolutionised their self-care.”

At the Swan Practice, 26% of all patients with online access to their test results have got a long term condition, such as asthma, diabetes or Crohn’s disease. “If they come to see me for a follow-up appointment and they have access

to their results, they usually have a good idea of what they would like to address,” practice nurse Helen says. “Having access to all their available test results has given them ownership of their illness.”

“My entire history at a snapshot”

Graeme is one of the practice’s patients with a long term condition and access to his online records. “I was diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis 10 years ago,” he says. “I keep pretty well but I take a broad range of medication and need regular blood tests.”

Before online test results became available, Graeme kept track of his results in a booklet. “In the past, I had to take my booklet with me to the practice whenever I had a blood test. One of the nurses would write down the

“Being able to view my test results online has been an eye opening experience”



results and a couple of days later I had to go back to pick it up from the reception desk," he explains. "It was certainly inconvenient, for myself and I believe for the practice as well. But as the information was so important to me, that's what I did."

Online access to his test results has changed the way Graeme monitors his illness. "I can see the results all the way back to 2006, which makes me understand my disease better," he says. "Recently I had raised liver levels, which is a concern. Because I was able to look at my past results, I noticed a few more occasions with similar results. The condition previously improved without further action, as indeed happened this time. At a snapshot, I could view my entire history. This gave me peace of mind."

Graeme regularly sees his rheumatoid specialist, who has not got access to his test results. "I can print my results at home or take my iPad with me and show her all the results online," he says. "If any of these are of a concern, she has got all the background there and then." Blood test results are a key part of Graeme's health management. "I can monitor the progress of my rheumatoid arthritis and they allow me to

check if I'm tolerating all the medication I take. Being able to view my test results online has been an eye opening experience."

About the practice

The Swan Practice is a two- site practice in rural Buckingham, looking after almost 20,000 patients. Almost half of them are signed up for online GP services. Since opening up online test results in August 2015, nearly 1,200 patients started using this service.