



Benefits of a clinical decision support solution

Out-of-hours, in-hours and urgent care services all face similar challenges regarding the clinical triage of patients. Using decision support technology could reduce the strain on services while enabling more effective patient triage.

The challenge

Unplanned care providers face strain on their services, due in part to overstretched staff resources. With senior healthcare professionals with specialist knowledge often dealing with high workload, non-clinically-trained staff are often called upon to prioritise cases in order to reduce the demand on unplanned care resources. The challenge is to lighten the burden of the unplanned care services by improving the prioritisation process of patients to ensure that they are seen in the right time frame, and in the right environment.

The solution

The ideal solution could be used by both clinical and non-clinical employees, ensuring staff resources could be effectively distributed according to need. Non-clinical staff can be confident in the decisions they make when using a clinically tested and proven clinical decision support system.

Comprehensive 'question sets' support the safe and efficient clinical triage of patients for a wide variety of presenting complaints. The solution would be flexible, with the potential for use in

a range of settings including out-of-hours call centres, walk-in centres, ambulance services, self-care services, GP front desks, pharmacies and prisons.

Other potential areas of use could include 111 call centres and any other environment that requires clinical triage, including emergency services, occupational health, child services and the armed forces.

Fast and accurate triage for self-assessment

Safe, efficient and easy to use self-assessment reduces demands on urgent and emergency services. With patients able to use a web-based or mobile app, they can assess their own symptoms easily.

This ensures patients get the "right-first-time" advice with appropriate signposting to the best service to contact that meets their needs. For example, in the case of a patient who otherwise might have called the emergency services, through using the self-assessment triage beforehand they could instead be directed to make a GP appointment the next day.

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Prioritisation of cases for call-handlers

With an easy-to-use interface, call-handlers working in urgent and unplanned care are guided effectively through the triage process, supported by best practice and having access to clinically safe care advice. The triage system can help call-handlers prioritise the most urgent cases; in the example of an ambulance service this can help reduce the amount of ambulances that are dispatched; at GP front desks staff can allocate GP appointments to patients based on clinical need rather than first-come, first-served.

A comprehensive, reliable solution for face-to-face settings

The use of a clinical decision support solution while interacting face-to-face with a patient can be invaluable as it allows a clinician's existing knowledge and experience to be supported when providing care advice to a patient.

In the case of a setting where non-clinically-trained staff may be responding to patients seeking urgent care and advice, the solution should be able to support staff by providing the clinical 'question sets' in lay terms – making the system easier to understand and interact with, while still providing the patient with best advice on the most appropriate care.

NICE-accredited clinical content

The optimal solution would contain clinical content to help signpost a wide range of initial patient cases towards the best care at the right time. With NICE-accredited clinical 'question sets', including specialisms such as mental health, child health, elderly care and dental problems, the solution would be under continuous clinical review to minimise clinical risk and optimise efficiency.

Features could include:

- > A range of presenting complaints
- > A wide variety of specific 'question sets'
- > Age and gender differentiation of questions and answers
- > Clinical and non-clinical language mirror-image versions
- > Locally configured destination outcomes linked to clinical urgencies

Flexible, integrated technology

The ideal clinical decision support solution would work across a variety of settings – from community pharmacies to GP surgeries, and out-of-hours care. The solution would help promote the drive for interoperability within healthcare, by seamlessly integrating with the healthcare service's existing clinical patient management technology, and would be able to be used effectively by both clinical and non-clinical users.

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