



Manage your Surgery Intuitively with Cegedim Healthcare Solution's Appointments



Even before the challenges created by COVID-19, GP practices were exploring a new era of fast, effective and intuitive appointment systems. For Leith Surgery in Leith, Edinburgh, this involved the transition to Appointments; part of Cegedim's Healthcare Solution's Shared Care Solution and GP IT Solution. The move to Appointments is reducing pressure on the front desk and helping to manage the peaks in demand at the beginning of the academic year created by the high proportion of students on the practice list.

Leith Surgery Practice Manager, Dawn Saltman and Office Manager, Lorna Russell, outline the benefits of Appointments.

Efficient and Effective Appointments

Leith Surgery has been using the new Appointments system for over a year. The surgery has 20 administrative staff, seven GPs, two nurses and a healthcare assistant. The practice is also approved for training doctors who have chosen a career in general practice, with three GP registrars.

Cegedim's Appointments enables staff to handle appointment requests with ease whether face-to-face, on the phone or online. With the ability to personalise fast and flexible searches to find patients, clinician, clinics and appointments it is easy to book, amend and cancel appointments quickly, reducing the pressure on reception staff. Lorna Russell describes the difference in booking appointments in the new system to the old as "Night and day", with the speed enabled by the ease of search. Appointments allows staff to identify available appointments in an instant – swiping or scrolling between weeks, if needed. With individual and practice wide filters and preferences available, the search process is tailored to meet the typical demands on reception staff.



The system is also easy to use, with new staff finding it very quick to learn – a bonus for the practice which employed two new receptionists during the COVID-19 lockdown. **“From one screen they have appointments, registrations and consultations has meant they have picked up this way of working a lot quicker than if we had had to explain each process separately,”** says Dawn Saltman. **“We have also received training tutorials from Cegedim which have been excellent.”**

Tailored Search

Leith Surgery took time to create the right searches before going live, setting up searches for individual doctors, other clinicians, routine and emergency appointments. Now, for example, if a patient requests an appointment with a specific GP, the receptionist simply clicks on that GP's name and all his or her available appointments come up. There is no extraneous information; the screen is clearer and much easier to see. The same process can be used for routine or emergency appointments with a doctor, or appointments with a practice nurse.

Lorna Russell says, **“We worked out what we were asked for at the front desk and created the corresponding search in Appointments. The process of finding the next available appointment is a lot easier for everybody.”** Dawn Saltman adds, **“The whole layout, the screens, everything is much easier to see than the previous version.”**

Leith Surgery is also utilising the colour coding within Appointments to make it even easier for staff to identify the correct information. For example, as a training practice, Leith Surgery offers consultations with a student – these are highlighted in colour enabling the receptionist to double check the patient is happy with that individual.

Rapid Patient Access

Patient search is also much faster, with Appointments offering a number of ways to locate a patient, including date of birth, the first few letters of their last name and first name, or a combination of last name and date of birth. The system pops up each date of birth, age, gender and NHS/CHI number to make it easy to select the right patient.

Dawn Saltman says, **“Once you have the appointments screen up you can just start typing a date of birth and it brings up the patient. When you go into that patient you can see all their information. You can then use the searches to find the right slot and put in the reason for the appointment.”**

In addition, Appointments shows the patient's next appointment and if or when they have cancelled; while appointments booked online are recorded in italics, making it easy to track activity. The practice is also using the monthly DNA report to reduce missed appointments. **“It is a very good tool for us to manage the DNA problem,”** Lorna Russell confirms.

COVID-19 Response

The surgery has also been able to rapidly adapt the system to cope with the demands of COVID-19. With online appointments suspended to avoid any COVID positive patients making an appointment, patient requests are now made by telephone, prior to being triaged by a GP via telephone. If necessary, the GP will then make an appointment – via video or face to face – on the system.

Lorna Russell explains, **“We have created a COVID search in the system. We have day to day appointments for GPs, day to day appointments for nurses and our HCA and then we have messages for the Doctors, all run through Appointments. All the information is there in the system, paperless, which has made it a lot easier and more efficient.”**

With all primary care services facing a time of transition, a flexible, adaptable appointments solution that ensures everyone in the practice is working from the same information, with a consistent layout is key. Dawn Saltman concludes,

“With Appointments we are all working as a team and we can quickly understand and respond to changing patient demand.”

