

Reducing DNAs

Doncaster and Bassetlaw Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (DBHFT)

By offering patients a choice of hospitals and a convenient date and time for their first outpatient appointment, Choose and Book gives patients certainty over when and where their appointments will be.

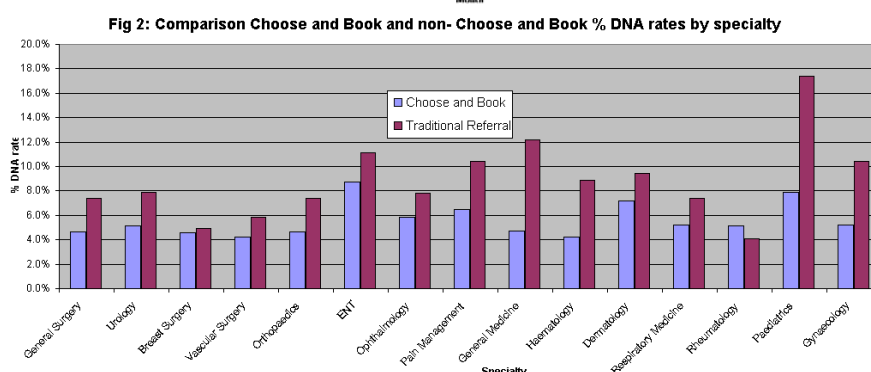
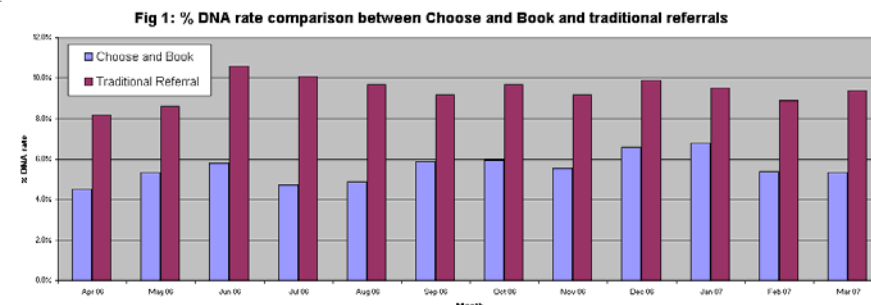
The DBHFT have been using Choose and Book since September 2005, and by April 2007, 57% of all referrals were received via Choose and Book.

One of the perceived benefits of the Choose and Book service is that the number of patient 'Did Not Attends' (DNAs) will be reduced because the patient has chosen the time, date and place of their appointment at their own convenience, rather than that of the NHS. This has proven to be the case in Doncaster, where use of Choose and Book has reduced DNAs by up to 60%.

Missed appointments are a problem for the NHS as they increase patient waiting times and generate inefficiencies by not maximising all available appointments in a clinic.

Before implementing Choose and Book, DBHFT had already identified the benefits of having patients agreeing to a convenient appointment, and were running a partial booking system where patients would be contacted by the hospital once a referral had been reviewed to arrange a convenient appointment.

Choose and Book improves on this process by minimising the



costly and time consuming manual elements of the booking process, while giving patients a confirmed appointment weeks earlier than was previously possible.

Between April 2006 and March 2007, the DNA rate for appointments booked via Choose and Book were consistently lower than appointments booked by the previous traditional methods. Monitoring the DNA rates over twelve months, showed that the average DNA rate of Choose and Book referrals had dropped by 60% compared with those referred in the traditional way. (See Fig 1).

The DNA data at specialty level was analysed by the Trust to see if this pattern was replicated across different departments. Results show that, apart from Rheumatology, the average DNA rate for appointments made via Choose and Book was lower.

This was especially noticeable in general medicine, paediatrics and gynaecology, where the difference was 50% or more. (see Fig 2)

"One of the common frustrations for staff in hospital clinics is the frequent disruption caused by failure of patients to turn up for their booked appointments. The problem of empty clinic slots, with the associated waste of valuable time and resource, is one that has caused concern to clinicians for many years and is one that has proved resistant to attempts to manage it. It is good to see the positive impact that the introduction of Choose and Book has had in achieving a significant reduction in the DNA rate."
Dr Emyr Jones, Medical Director