

# Nurse-led telephone outreach for a COVID-adapted suspected colorectal cancer pathway

Bell, S., Crawford, J., Gunn, F., Noble, C., Miller, J., Dunlop, M., Maeda, Y. and Din, F., 2021. Nurse-led telephone outreach for a COVID-adapted suspected colorectal cancer pathway. *Gastrointestinal Nursing*, 19(1), pp.22-26

**COVID-19 has brought about unprecedented challenges to healthcare services in the UK.**

The pandemic led to the cessation of colonoscopy and outpatient clinics. A bespoke COVID-adapted cancer pathway, using computed tomography (CT) scanning and the quantitative faecal immunochemical test (qFIT), was introduced to mitigate the risks of patients referred with potential colorectal cancer.

This study aims to evaluate the workload of patient telephone calls undertaken by nurses and their impact on the operation of the pathway. Methods: Data were collected prospectively and analysed to assess the volume of patient flow, number of calls made and content of conversations.

During a 2-month period, 975 patients (56.6% female, median age 63 years) were registered on the COVID-adapted cancer pathway. The 45.9% (n=448) of patients who did not return qFIT tests in a timely manner were contacted. Of these, 9.4% (n=42) requested to postpone or declined an appointment. Most were appreciative of the opportunity to clarify the rationale of the pathway and address any concerns.

Phone calls made and received by nursing staff were helpful to discuss patient concerns and increase patients' understanding of the alternative treatment options available during the pandemic.

This service evaluation demonstrates the value of the often 'hidden' aspects of our role. Whilst commenced in response to the Covid pandemic service initiatives of this type would be valuable, cost effective and convenient for patients and should be something we all consider for parts of our services.

For more information on service evaluation and demonstrating your worth you can always look at [www.apollonursingresource.com](http://www.apollonursingresource.com). This site has a range of resources to help guide and support you in developing and supporting you and your service.

