

The Effect of Increasing Audiology Services for Patients referred to an ENT Department

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Background

In early 2013 there were over 2,000 people on the ENT waiting list at the Royal Hobart Hospital, with more being added every week. Additional Audiology staff were employed for two years to investigate the effect of increasing Audiology staffing on a ENT wait list. This was funded by the National Partnership Agreement program.

Method

Over 2500 referrals were reviewed and patients who were referred for ear or hearing related disorders were offered an Audiological assessment prior to ENT review. Following the audiology assessment they were retriaged and managed accordingly.

Result

Preliminary data indicates that 40% of patients on the ENT wait list required Audiological assessment. Many patients responded that they no longer needed an appointment and were removed from the waiting list.

Of those patients seen and re categorised over 50% had their triage status changed, with 10% having their status changed from CAT2 or 3 to CAT 1. It was also found that at least 20% of patients could be discharged directly from Audiology and did not require ENT management.

Discussion

Providing Audiological assessment prior to ENT consultations decreases the number of ENT appointments required. Patients were also given advice about hearing loss and tinnitus management at an earlier stage.

In summary the project found that providing appropriate levels of Audiological care to patient attending ENT clinics has a significant effect on patient management and waiting lists.