

Newsflash Article June 2011

Subject: PHMG Patient Advisory Council May 2011 Question That Matters

Headline:

When a PHMG provider gives a patient a referral to a specialist how long should the referral process take?

Content:

The PeaceHealth Medical Group Patient Advisory Council asks friends and neighbors a “**question that matters**” each month. Last month’s question had two parts. The first part was:

What do you consider to be an appropriate timeframe for a referral to another provider?

Patient responses were

- Would like to receive contact from the referring providers within 24 hours
- 24 hours is too soon to expect contact
- Would like an appointment within two weeks
- Contact time not as important as when the appointment is. A patient advisor shared that contact was made within one week, but the appointment was 3 months out and was rescheduled several times putting the appointment 5 months out.
- The most important thing is a call of acknowledgement that the information has been received and the office is working on scheduling the appointment.
- The Advisory Council discussed referral agreements of service standards are currently being worked on.

The second question was:

What impacts how long or short this interval is in your mind?

Patient responses were

- Patients did not know what the standard length of time is, but felt there needed to be a standard.
- Patients need to know how serious the situation is and how urgent to be able to know how long the interval should be. Patients want their doctor to give a CLEAR message as to urgency and their professional opinion. Patients shared experiences of not knowing the situation was serious and they waited months for an appointment. They felt sharing information about the situation was critical to enabling the patient to know how proactive they should be.

- The appropriate timeframe is based on seriousness of the problem and the pain level.
- The level of the patient's emotional stress is based on the unknown information.
- The doctor and care team need to handle follow up with a referral to make sure it happens in a timely manner. The provider's office should call the patient and referred office to ensure the appointment is scheduled.