The Alt-Con Project:
Alternatives to face to face consultation with GPs

Information Sheet for Patients and Carers for Permission to Observe their Consultation

Introduction

This information sheet is to explain what taking part in this study involves.

Technology is now part of everyday life and most of us communicate with each other using electronic devices such as mobile phones, tablets and computers by texting, email, social media and internet video such as Skype or FaceTime etc. The use of this technology, however, is varied when it comes to how patients are able to talk to doctors about their health concerns and we are interested in finding out more about this.

We are doing some research on possible alternatives to consultations with a GP. This will be looking at whether doing consultations by phone or using email or Skype, instead of going to the surgery to see the doctor face to face, may be better for patients and the staff in the health centre. We will also aim to try to understand how, when and who might benefit from such alternatives. In addition, we are interested in any concerns about using these types of consultations.

Who is funding and carrying out the project?

The Project is funded by the National Institute of Health Research and the University of Bristol is leading this project, along with The Universities of Oxford, Edinburgh and Exeter. The study will take place in eight practices in and around Bristol, Oxford, Lothian, the Highlands and Islands of Scotland.

This study has been approved by the Research and Ethics Committee Yorkshire and the Humber – South Yorkshire on the 23 March 2015.

Why have I been chosen?

We want to learn from patients and carers from a surgery that uses, is about to use or has previously used consultations by phone, email or Skype.

You have had, or plan to have, a consultation with your GP. We would like to observe the conversation you had with your GP and are seeking permission from you to allow us to do this.

What will happen if I take part?

If you agree to take part we will observe your consultation with your GP. We may also ask you if you would be happy to take part in an interview with one of our researchers at a future date

If you are happy for us to observe your consultation then please complete the consent forms enclosed. Please keep a copy for yourself and return the other to the researcher or in the pre-paid envelope.

What are the possible risks or disadvantages of taking part?

We do not think there are any risks to allowing us to observe your consultation with your GP as we promise to keep your information confidential and we will not identify you in any way in any papers or other output from the research.

What are the potential benefits of participating?

The report produced from the evaluation will input into improving and planning future services.

What will happen to the information I give?

All information we receive will be treated in strict confidence and no details that would identify anyone will be used. The information used by the researchers will not contain any identifying details such as your name or address. No details that might identify you will appear in the study reports, publications or conference presentations. If you disclose anything that puts yourself or others at risk of harm then we have a duty of care to share this information with the appropriate services.

Do I have to take part?

No. Taking part in this study is entirely voluntary. It is up to you to decide whether to take part or not. You can agree to take part in the way you want by ticking the relevant part of the consent form that you will be given to read and sign. If you decide to take part, you are free to leave the study at any time without giving a reason. You have the right to refuse permission for researchers to use your information. Should you wish to request that information about you is not recorded or used in the study, you can speak directly to a practitioner, receptionist or researcher who will ensure that any information about you is not used. A record will be made to this effect. Choosing not to participate, or withdrawing from the study, will not affect your care in any way.

You can also email, telephone or write to the project contact (details provided below) at any time to ask that information about you is not used.

What will happen to the results of the study?

We will produce a report of the study and share the findings on our website http://www.bristol.ac.uk/alt-con/. In addition, the findings will contribute to the development of a website resource with recommendations for practices about how to implement the most promising alternatives and model the best methodological approach for evaluation.

The results of this study will be published in academic journals without the use of any information that could identify any individual participant. We can send you a summary of the findings if you would like one. We plan to play selected short audio clips in research outputs and publications, unless you do not give consent.

Making a complaint

If you take part and are unhappy with any aspect of this project, you can contact the [INSERT LOCAL DETAILS FOR THE NHS Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)/ customer contact centre/patient feedback service> at your <local Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)/NHS England/Health Board>. Details can be found at <NHS choices/England/Health board website].

In your letter, please provide as much detail about the project as possible, the name of the researcher and indicate the nature of your complaint.

More information is available from:

The Alt-Con Project website: http://www.bristol.ac.uk/alt-con/

Email: sscm-alt-con@bristol.ac.uk

[INSERT NAME AND DETAILS OF THE LOCAL RESEARCHER]

We thank you kindly for your time and involvement in the project.