



Norwegian Centre for
E-health Research

Can Increased Patient Involvement Reduce the Number of Surgery Cancellations?

Lessons learned from a research and development project in Norway

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Background

- Increased patient involvement is the new mantra in modern health and care services
- Empowering patients to take an active role in their own health has been nationally and internationally identified as a key initiative to improve health and care services



Research Question

Can increased patient involvement and digitalization reduce the number of elective surgery cancellations at the University Hospital in North Norway?





Method

Revisiting the findings from a recent research and development project, the eTeam-Surgery (2013–2019) by studying the reality of increased patient involvement in hospitals





Method continued:

1. Following the quality improvement initiative to reduce cancellations at the hospital
2. Fieldwork at the hospital
3. Patient interviews



Results:

1) The quality improvement initiative

Reasons for cancellations

- Maladjusted resource planning, 67%
- Patient will and no-show, 12%
- Other, 11%
- Medical, 10%





Results:

2) Fieldwork at the hospital

- The patient data requested by the hospital, prior to surgery, differed between departments
- If data were returned by the patients (by the postal system) to the hospital, it had different meanings for different departments and individuals
- Different individuals within the same department interacted with the patient in different moments of the pre-operative planning process



Results:

3) Patient interviews

- Patients were assigned a date of surgery without being involved or asked their availability
- The surgery was cancelled when they tried to reschedule it to another day (in the Norwegian healthcare system, cancellations have consequences for patient priority in accessing surgery)
- Some patients expressed their wish to be digitally involved in deciding the date of surgery.





Discussion

Active patient involvement can help solve the elective surgery cancellation problem. However, as this paper demonstrate, in 2013-2019, the eTeam-Surgery project was ahead of its time. We are concerned that similar e-health interventions today might suffer from similar prematurity. To achieve patient involvement, the first step for hospitals might be to allow patients to schedule their own surgery date, in a similar way to how they book an airline ticket online.



Conclusion

Increased patient involvement is wanted and needed, but hospitals, as organizations, are not ready for it yet. Hospitals have a long way to go before the new mantra of increased patient involvement is a useful asset in improving health and care services.



Thank you for your attention!

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