

Participant and (future) provider experience of Shared Medical Appointments - effective, efficient and empowering

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Introduction

Shared Medical Appointments (SMAs, also known as Group Consultations) are a **transformative model of healthcare delivery which places those with lived experience at the centre**. SMAs have been found to be a positive experience with patients and providers due to peer support; greater time to address needs; increased health literacy; a dismantling of the doctor-patient hierarchy. The implementation of SMAs clinically in Australia is nascent.

Aims

1. To develop a clinical service programme utilising the SMA model of healthcare delivery to improve metabolic health.
2. To examine biomedical parameters before and after the programme.
3. To determine participant satisfaction with this model of care.
4. To explore the perspective of future providers (medical students) on SMA as a clinical tool.

Methodology

- Participants wishing to improve their metabolic health were recruited into the programme. The programme consisted of 6 SMAs run over the course of 3-4 months. SMAs were scheduled on week 1, 2, 4, 6, 10 and 14. The first programme was conducted virtually; the subsequent 2 programmes are in process and are being held face-to-face.
- Biomedical parameters were collected at the start and end of the programme. Microbiome analysis, detailed eye assessment and lipid subfraction analysis was offered to interested participants. Participants were provided with a workbook containing relevant information and resources.
- Y3 MD students from Deakin University were engaged in the programme as part of a clinical placement.
- Focus group analysis was conducted at the end of the programme with participants and students by RWB (independent of clinical care provision).

Results

SMA Programme #1:

Four participants consented to engage in a virtual programme of SMA. HbA1c, a marker of metabolic health was available for 3 of the 4 participants:

HbA1c	Pre-SMA	Post-SMA
Subject 1	6.2%	5.9%
Subject 2	7.1%	6.9% - reduction in diabetes medications
Subject 3	8.3%	7.4% - reduction in diabetes medications

All participants reported improved:

- Health literacy
- Sleep
- Stress management
- Self management

Challenges identified:

- Length of the SMA
- Individuals dominating the session.

MD Student perspective of SMA:

- New relationship between doctors and patients.
- Inspired me.
- More friendly and no rush.
- It was fun seeing patient engagement; it was rewarding.

Participant perspective of SMA:

- It's the first time I've ever felt comfortable to tell people a lot more about myself.
- I was more relaxed; it was not rushed.
- Other people asked questions that I didn't think about that was helpful.

SMA Programme #2 & #3:

Six participants are enrolled in programme #2 and seven in programme #3 currently in progress face-to-face (3 of 6 SMAs completed).

Conclusions

SMAs are an innovative model of care that is effective, efficient and empowering by engaging participants in self-management practices through increased health literacy. The impact of SMA is encapsulated with the following quote from a participant from SMA Programme #1:

“It’s been useful; it’s potentially life changing and, in some respects, life saving or life extending.”

And from a MD student: **“Reminds me what medicine is all about”.**