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Title: An innovative and cost effective approach to reduce speech and language therapy voice waiting lists using patient focused group therapy sessions.

Body: Background:

The SLT department in SIVUH established an innovative voice waitlist initiative in response to National Targets. There were 232 patients awaiting initial assessment, with an average wait of 2-3 years with the longest at 5 years. Group education sessions focused on holistic self-management of voice disorders and therapy techniques with the emphasis on the patient taking ownership of their rehabilitation. The aim of the study was to evaluate the patients experience and the efficacy of this model to manage waiting lists.

Methodology:

Patients attended a 2-hour evening group session, topics covered were normal voice production, voice disorders, lifestyle modifications, mindfulness, and therapy techniques. Qualitative analysis was carried out using pre and post patient satisfaction questionnaires evaluating their experience. Quantitate analysis was carried out to evaluate the efficiency of the initiative.

Results:

Patient experience was positive with increased confidence in self-management of voice disorders. The waitlist reduced from 232 to 107 in three months. Speech and Language Therapy input time reduced from approximately 200 hours to 30 hours to take 46% of people off the waiting list.

Conclusion:

This is a very effective and efficient way of managing a generic SLT voice waitlist from a patient and a staff resource perspective.

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