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Have you moved house recently?

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Abstract Objective: To determine the proportion of women attending the colposcopy and general gynaecology clinic who have changed their address since the initial visit. **Design:** A prospective analysis of 100 patients seen between July and December 2003 in both colposcopy and gynaecology clinics. **Results:** A total of 100 women seen in each of the clinics in the previous 6 months were included for the analysis. In the colposcopy clinic 62% had changed their home address from the initial visit address and in the general gynaecology clinic 35%. **Conclusions:** It is mandatory to check the home address of patients at each clinic visit especially in the colposcopy clinic where more than 50% women change their address. This will avoid serious errors of omission regarding results and other management issues. Further prospective studies and protocol for prompts to standard clinic letters will help to update patient details.

Keywords Change of address · House · Colposcopy · Gynaecology

Introduction

At a colposcopy clinic we recently noticed that nearly 80% of patients had changed their home address since the initial visit. This prompted us to do a study to determine how many patients move house between visits. We conducted this survey to determine reasons for moving house. Information from the British Household Panel Survey [1] states that 10% of adults move house every year in the United Kingdom. Recent research shows that the proportion of persons looking to buy a new home in the next 12 months has fallen to its lowest in 4 years, but the figures from our survey at Whipps Cross University Hospital suggest otherwise.

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Our analysis shows that 62% of patients in the colposcopy clinic and 35% in the gynaecology clinic had moved house.

Methods and materials

The study was performed at the gynaecology out-patient follow-up clinic of Whipps Cross University Hospital. The Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology caters to the women of Waltham Forest, Woodford, Ilford and Loughton, and other surrounding areas. The consultant involved (H.A.) has one gynaecology clinic and one colposcopy clinic each week. The sample included the last 100 patients each in the colposcopy and gynaecology clinics seen between July and December 2003. An itemized questionnaire was completed on each of these patients with the aid of case notes and interview with patients. The characteristics of patients who changed their home address were compared with those who did not.

Results

Of the last 100 patients seen in the colposcopy clinic (9 June–29 December 2003) 62 had changed address since the initial visit—52 once and 10 twice. Of the last 100 patients in the general gynaecology clinic (5 November 2003–8 December 2003) 35 had changed address since the initial visit—29 once and 6 twice. The age of movers was in the range of 26–55 years. The common reasons given for change of address were: occupational demands, family demands for more space, marriage/separation/divorce, change of life-style, need for independence, and moving up the property ladder.

Discussion

We found that nearly 50% of patients from the two clinics combined had moved address in preceding 6 months. This demonstrates that it is essential to check the patient's address, phone number and e-mail address at each appointment. A correct address is important

for reducing nonattendance and for planning further treatment and management. Missed appointments can affect the patient's health, disrupt schedules and result in poor utilization of resources and increased workload for staff.

Reference

1. British Household Panel Survey (2001) Derived current and annual net household income variables. Institute for Social and Economic Research, University of Essex, Colchester