

UNITED KINGDOM: "'Do It Yourself' Sexual Health Care: The User Experience" Sexual Health Vol. 8; No. 1: P. 23-29 (01..11):: Paula Baraitser; Kirsty Collander Brown; Zachary Gleisner; Vikki Pearce; Usha Kumar; Michael Brady

In the current study, the team sought to describe "client experience of self-management within a busy walk-in sexual health service." In this context, self-management refers to self-registration and take-home pregnancy kits, chlamydia and gonorrhoea tests, or condoms received from a free vending machine. The study comprised 24 in-depth, semi-structured interviews with users; 19 structured written reports from "mystery shoppers" paid to visit the service and report their experience; demographic details of persons using the self-management option from the clinic database; and 40 hours of recorded observation in the clinic waiting room.

Between Sept. 2, 2008, and Sept. 1, 2009, 18,657 people made 28,545 clinic visits. A total of 1,845 (6.5 percent) visits were self-managed by 1,555 patients (8.3 percent of all clients). Among those who self-managed, 646 (35 percent) obtained a chlamydia and gonorrhoea test only; 597 (32 percent) obtained condoms only; and 488 (27 percent) obtained a pregnancy test only.

Clinic visitors appreciated the self-management option "because of the reduced waiting times, autonomy, and privacy that such a service offers," the authors reported. "Some prefer the additional support offered within a clinical consultation. Users made personalized decisions about self-management based on time pressure, need for additional services, and preferred source of support. Users often required help and advice from client support workers to complete the self-management process. This created problems with confidentiality."

The team concluded that self-management "is an acceptable option within sexual health services if informal support is available. Self-management options in clinical services could mean that 8 percent of clients at 6 percent of visits do not need to see a clinician, thus freeing up clinical capacity."