Five easy ways to help achieve a smoother CQC compliance

Dr Shilla Talati provides part one of her articles on CQC compliance

As it dawns on us all, we will all be faced with an inspector calling from CQC (if you haven’t had one already). The question is: are you prepared?

In this series of articles, I will be writing tips on achieving compliance based on the several outcomes CQC are looking at.

This article will be based on: OUTCOME 1: Respecting and involving patients who use services.

This outcome focuses on patients and how they are treated at your practice. So we have to ensure that they are looked after in the best way possible. To comply with CQC, we need to demonstrate how we are going to do just this. There are many aspects you will need to focus on. The four main areas in practice include: The patient focus, The staff focus, The clinician focus and The practice management focus.

The patient focus

TIP 1: Make a list of patients who CQC could contact:

CQC will be looking to interview your patients during their inspections. It may be easier for you to have a list of patients on standby who the CQC could contact. They will be asked several questions including:

• Their patient journey - how they felt they were treated, right from the minute they entered the practice, till when they left.
• Their experiences with the practice which will include their dignity being respected
• The care they have received from all the staff and clinicians
• The actual treatment they have received
• They may also do “real time” observations of patients being treated at the practice at the time of an inspection

TIP 2: Make sure your patient views are taken into account for the delivery of the service you provide. This could include simple things such as:

• Patient journey feedback questionnaires - you could ask each patient after their treatment is complete to comment on how they found the process. (You could make it easier for the patient to fill in and have direct questions they could answer so it’s not so much of a chore for them to fill out)
• Patient discussion groups held at the practice to discuss improvements to the practice. The practice team as a whole could set aside an evening where they could invite patients to discuss the practice and care they receive there. This could be based on several different categories of patients such as:
  Those with families may want to discuss waiting room facilities for children, after school appointment, late evening appointments, child friendly clubs/afternoons during school holidays etc
  Those with disabilities - may want to discuss access issues, patient literature availability in large print, confidentiality with careers etc
  Elderly patients may want to discuss things like hard seating area in the waiting rooms so that they can get out of the chairs more easily etc
• Patient suggestion boxes. These are ideal for patients as they may not want you to know that it was them who said particular comments about the practice, especially if they are negative comments. It given the patient more freedom to comment

The clinician focus

TIP 3: Make sure all patients receive a treatment plan and estimate of the costs involved.

This may include things that dentists should record in the patients record card like:

• Discussions held on treatment options, ideally including the costs of each option and the pros and cons of each
• Show patient involvement in the decision making of the treatment choice including refusal of treatment
• A treatment plan for the patient
• An estimate of the costs (and whether it is NHS or Private)
• You could also do several audits in this area to show compliance of this area. It will also aid in improvement to writing patient records if they are not that great. Staff could get involved here and help improve this area

The staff focus

TIP 4: Make sure all staff members maintain confidentiality for the patients and are aware of such a policy in place.

Therefore it is helpful to have:

• A confidentiality policy
• All staff members are trained about it and know its whereabouts
• Have a staff meeting on it and get all your staff to sign the policy to make sure they are aware of it and agree to adhere to it

The practice management focus

TIP 5: Information is readily made available to patients.

This may include things like:

• Patient Charges - these should ideally be displayed and all patients should be aware of them
• A Complaints procedure displayed and patients are aware of who to contact in case of a complaint
• Practice Information leaflet available - possibly in different formats if necessary for your patients (Including large print/braille etc)

There are many ways to show your compliance of this outcome and the tips above are only a few of them. The method of compliance for each practice will be individual to that practice.

About the author

Dr Shilla Talati is a partner MD of Dental Perfection and has a special interest in the managing side of her dental practice. She also writes several articles on compliance and is also involved with medico-legal aspects of patient care. To contact Shilla please email her on Shillatalati@yahoo.co.uk
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