

The impact of telephone triage on workload and quality in primary care: a realist review

Telephone triage has become normal in many GP surgeries across the country. It is a way of assessing patients' needs to find out how urgently they need help and to decide the best way to help them. This could result in several outcomes, like an appointment with a GP or advice to phone an ambulance.

Telephone triage is seen as a way of making it easier for patients to access their GP. However, we don't know what impact it has on workload in primary care. It might mean less work for GPs, but this may mean more work for other staff. We also don't know what it means for quality care in general practice. Does telephone triage mean good quality care for patients?

To learn more, we are conducting a realist review. This involves looking at many different kinds of evidence to learn more about how telephone triage works in practice. This could mean research on telephone triage, policy documents and opinion pieces. It also involves speaking to stakeholders (GPs, practice managers, receptionists, patients) and involving their views in interpreting the findings.

Ultimately, we are trying to answer questions about how and why telephone triage makes a difference to quality of care and workload for GPs, nurses, practice managers, receptionists and patients.