Improving patient’s experience for Medisave bill payments at Specialist Outpatient Clinics (SOC)

Fong Tze Yin Terence, Pharmacy
Tan Mui Chai, Pharmacy
Josephine Ng Ying Tian, SOC
Gladys Ang Si Ying, SOC
Tina Phua Yen Tin, SOC
Kemas Muhamad Zulhaimi Bin K A, SOC

Background
Medisave is a national medical savings scheme in Singapore. To make healthcare more accessible and affordable, the Ministry of Health introduced the Chronic Disease Management Programme (CDMP) and Flexi-Medisave (FM) intended for outpatient use. Patient journey in the outpatient setting at Singapore General Hospital (SGH) often involve multiple touchpoints. Those making payment by CDMP and FM is further complicated by an extra stop as they will be sent to specialized Outpatient Medisave Service (OMS) counters. This leads to excessive patient movement and additional waiting time created for a patient population that is increasingly made up of people in the silver generation. Consequently, the CDMP/FM billing process was reviewed with the aim to enhance patient’s experience.

Methodology

Reviewing current challenges

Patients with medications utilizing Medisave walk to OMS counters twice:
• To verify and input 3rd Party Payer code and diagnosis after consultation
• For processing bills after consult or collecting medication from pharmacy

Issues arising from current patient journey:
• Congestion at OMS counters and pharmacy
• Excessive patient movement of ~280 steps

Designing strategy for improvement
To help patients REST
(Reduce Excessive movement, Shorten waiting Time)
1. Collaborate and engage with stakeholders to formulate solution
2. Seek buy-in from clinic staff, pharmacy and business office for roll out
3. Seek management advice and approval for implementation
4. Mass communication to various stakeholders by:
   • Sharing at clinic roll calls & department meeting
   • Email notifications
   • Preparing notice and flyers for patients and staff
   • Preparing FAQs for stakeholders

Results
Since implementation of Drop & Go for Medisave billing in August 2018, average daily number of Medisave transactions increased from 108 to 180 per day (~66.7% increase in Medisave utilization).

Drop & Go take-up rate
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aug – Dec 2018</th>
<th>Jan – May 2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average number of Medisave cases/day</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average number of Drop &amp; Go cases/day</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

% take-up rate
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aug – Dec 2018</th>
<th>Jan – May 2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Majority of patients are receptive to utilizing Drop & Go for Medisave payments.

Benefits of streamlined patient journey:
• 50% reduction of patient touchpoints achieved
• Time saving ~30minutes due to elimination of need to queue at OMS and waiting for bills to be processed
• Eliminated excessive and unnecessary patient movement
• Up to 5 counter space may be freed up for other relevant functions

Conclusion
This project created a more pleasant and seamless patient experience by reducing excessive movement and waiting time. The new process helps shorten the turn-around time for processing Medisave bills, allowing manpower to be more efficiently diverted to other initiatives benefiting those who require more immediate attention. The project is also a step towards the direction the national objective of going cashless and providing additional payment options for patients and SGH’s objective of going counter-less in future clinic models.

In the future, this project may be expanded further to tap on the clinical expertise of pharmacists doing post-consult reviews and medication delivery service to further streamline and simplify patients’ healthcare journey.