

Promoting travel health consultations

PLAN FOR SUCCESS

Careful consideration should be given to the travel health program at a clinic level to ensure patients receive a consistent consult. This involves careful promotional planning that is specific to the clinic goals and resources available.

It doesn't need to be complicated – just a list of activities, the timing, and the name of the person who will be responsible for each action.

It is sometimes said that people need to hear information three times before they act on it. This means that repeating your promotional activities as many times as possible is likely to increase participation.

PROMOTIONAL STRATEGIES

Promote travel health consultations within your practice

A simple solution to help raise awareness of travel health in your practice is to promote it along with your other services.

This may include adding it to the list of services on your practice window display or A-frame sign just outside your practice. You can also display posters and flyers in your waiting room – you can find some existing materials in the 'Resources' section of this toolkit.

For practices that have video displays in the waiting room, why not record a short clip to add to the other health promotion messages and practice services? This option is low cost and can be customised to your clinic.

Inform existing patients

To raise awareness of travel vaccinations at your practice, recall your existing patients by sending a reminder SMS, email or letter. You already have a relationship with them and they are likely to be receptive to your invitation.

Unlike influenza vaccinations, people will require travel vaccinations at different times throughout the year – based on when and where they will be travelling. But there is still value in sending a reminder to your patients so they know the service is available for any future holiday plans. You could also try sending out reminders a month or two prior to summer or school holidays, when more of your patients are likely to be heading overseas.

Local radio/newspaper advertising

Placing short adverts in local publications or recording radio adverts is an effective way of reaching large numbers of people. There is likely to be a cost involved, although it is worth talking to the publication or radio station and asking if they will consider running the advert as a free community service announcement. Remember, the more you repeat your advertisement, the more likely you are to have an impact.

PLACE INFORMATION ON YOUR WEBSITE AND SOCIAL MEDIA

You probably already have a website and possibly a profile on social media, such as Facebook or Twitter. Think about how you can use these channels to promote travel vaccination consultations. An easy approach is to add 'Travel health consults' to the list of services you provide.

You could take a more comprehensive approach by authoring a short article – perhaps a blog post – where you discuss an aspect of a disease that is common for people to encounter when travelling abroad. You might consider this approach around the same time that you are reminding patients about travel health consults (i.e. prior to summer and school holidays). Here are a few tips for writing an effective social media post:

- Understand who you're targeting and write for your audience
- Keep things simple by avoiding jargon and long words
- Use active language that focuses on the benefit to the reader
- Consider the word count – ideally no more than 100 words
- Include a clear call to action

HAVE PATIENT INFORMATION AVAILABLE

Most practices have areas dedicated to providing patient information. Make sure information about 'at risk' travel destinations and that travel health information and vaccinations are provided at your practice, as well as details about booking a travel health consultation.

RECORD A NEW 'ON-HOLD' MESSAGE

Add 'Travel health consults' to your existing list of services and/or create a special message to play prior to upcoming summer and school holiday periods.