

Speech Pathology Referrals

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The problem

Not all patients who could benefit from seeing a Speech Pathologist at GV Health were being referred to the Speech Pathology service.

Speech Pathologists can make a significant difference to patients with swallowing and communication difficulties and have a positive impact on patient wellbeing, safety, nutrition and hydration.

Approximately 30% of patients admitted with stroke, or swallowing and communication difficulties were not accessing Speech Pathology services at GV Health.

Nurses and doctors at GV Health were surveyed in April/May 2015 to measure their knowledge regarding *when* and *how* to refer patients to Speech Pathology.

Staff were only aware of *some* of the patient symptoms which were risk factors or clues for referral.

What did we do about it?

A range of redesign strategies were implemented throughout GV Health to raise the profile of Speech Pathology and improve staff knowledge of red flags for referral.

For example, Speech Pathology was added to the Stroke Call page from the Emergency Department, following process mapping of an at-risk patient journey.

A cartoon was developed...

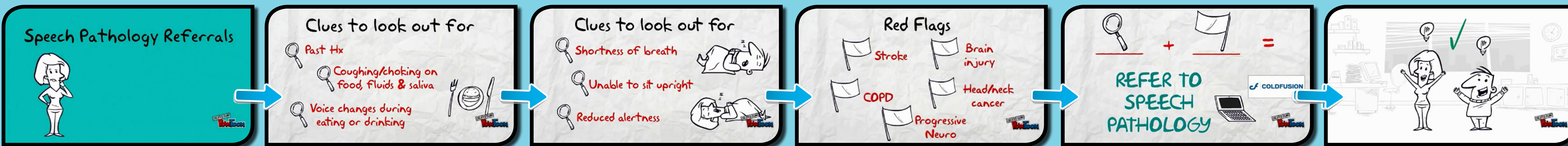
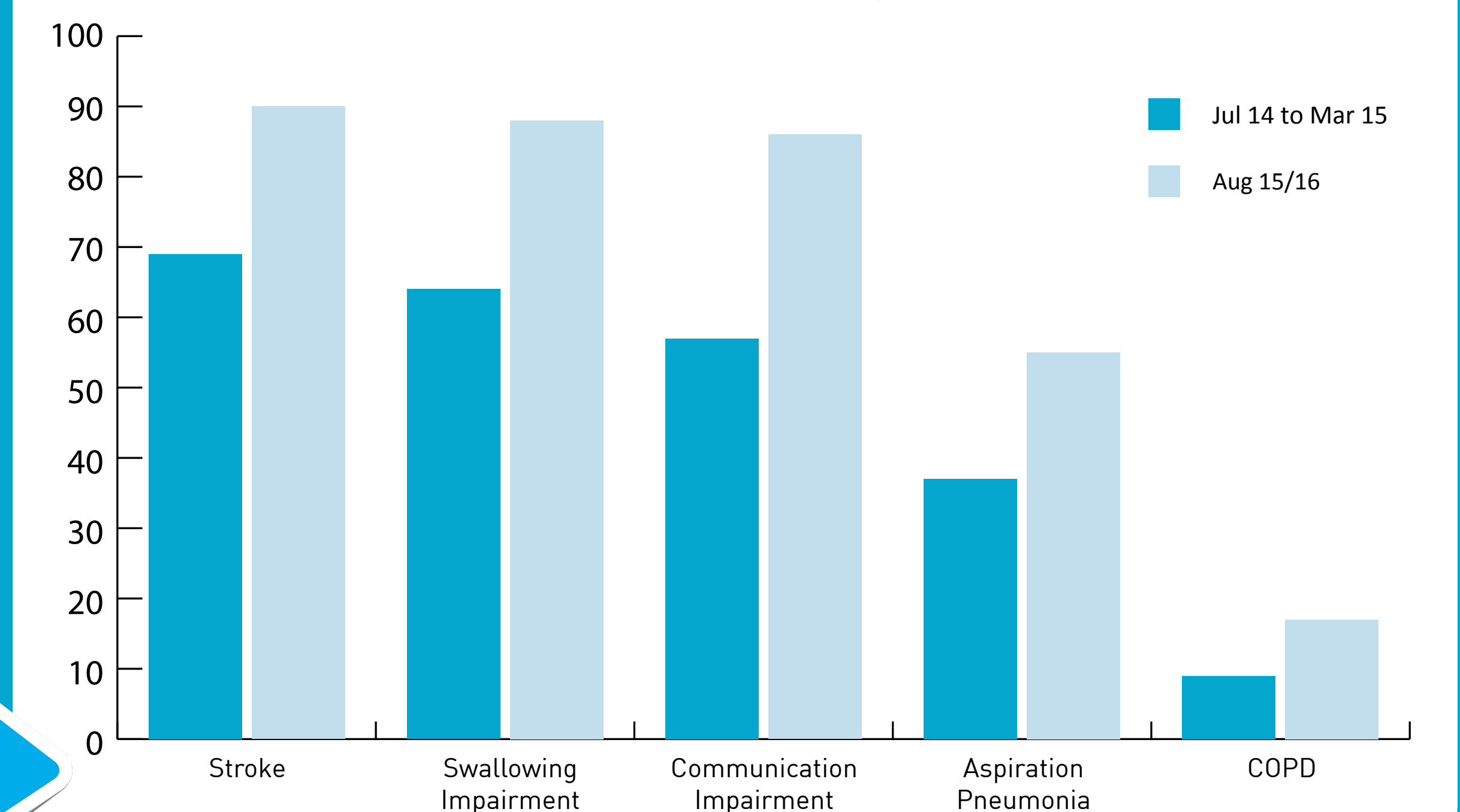
A four-minute Speech Pathology Referrals cartoon was developed using Powtoon, which was shown to almost 300 staff at GV Health via a tablet, posting a link on the intranet, and emailing the YouTube link to doctors and nurses.

The cartoon was shown on the wards during staff breaks, meetings, and double staff times. This provided intense exposure to the cartoon in a convenient and time efficient way, as opposed to the typical in-service training sessions, which lasted more than 30 minutes.

What was the result?

Nurses and doctors improved their knowledge of the risks associated with 'clues' (patient symptoms) and 'Red Flags' (conditions or diagnoses) seen every day on the wards. This was also reflected in the referral data shown in the graph below:

% patients referred to Speech Pathology with at-risk conditions



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c5ftYu9H-jw>

What do we do differently now?

Compared with data gathered at the start of the project:

30% more staff would now refer to Speech Pathology if a patient is not alert or fully conscious, due to knowledge of involved in feeding tests.

30% more staff would refer to Speech Pathology for shortness of breath, as they now know it is linked with swallowing problems.

24% more staff would refer to Speech Pathology if a patient was having trouble following instructions, as it likely suggests a communication difficulty.

20% increase in referrals on average for admitted patients with stroke, swallowing problems, communication problems, aspiration pneumonia and COPD.

Currently, **16** more admitted GV Health patients per month have the opportunity to access Speech Pathology services that they need.

200 more admitted patients have accessed this much needed service in 2015/2016 compared with the previous year.

