

# Are grown-ups with congenital heart disease any better at keeping outpatient clinic appointments? – a local audit

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## AIM

Non-attendance to hospital outpatient (OP) clinics is a universal issue. Apart from contributing to healthcare services financial burden, this can have potentially serious clinical implications. This is particularly relevant for grown-up congenital heart disease (GUCH) patients, where missing out on specialist follow-up has been shown to be a predictor of mortality in GUCH patients independent of adjustment for patients' age, disease complexity, functional class and socioeconomic status. At the same time, these patients would have been through several hospital appointments in their younger years, and it would thus be reasonable to expect them to understand the importance of attending outpatient visits when called for. The aim of this study was to investigate differences in the non-attendance rates to the GUCH OP clinical and to a General Cardiology (GC) OP at Mater Dei Hospital (MDH).

## Methodology

The number of attendees and of non-attendees to GUCH clinic and the GC OP clinic run by the same consultant were recorded over a 6-month period between January and June 2017. Data was collected using the database Cardiovascular Information System (CVIS). The diagnosis and patient gender were documented. Non-attendees were defined as patients that failed to attend their designated appointment without prior notice. Chi-Square test was used to analyse differences between the 2 groups. Statistical significance was defined as  $p < 0.05$ .

## Results

357 GC OP and 282 GUCH OP appointments were included for analysis. There was no significant difference in non-attendances between GC patients (55 (15.4%)) and GUCH patients (48 (17.0%)) ( $p=0.581$ ). Patient gender had no significant effect on non-attendance patterns, with 17.1% non-attendance rate for male GUCH compared to 14.2% for male GC patients ( $p=0.431$ ) and 16.9% non-attendance rate for female GUCH compared to 16.9% for female GC patients ( $p=0.867$ ).

## Conclusion

Contrary to expectations, non-attendance rates to GUCH clinic were not statistically lower, with non-attendance rates comparable to those quoted in the international literature. This could indicate the need for better patient education from an early age to ensure that patients understand the importance of regular outpatient surveillance.