

Healthcare portals have become a vital part of modern clinical practice, especially with the rise of **video consultations** and **online booking screens**. They promise convenience and speed, enabling patients to engage with services remotely. However, when a patient is unwell—particularly if they are experiencing symptoms like brain fog—these portals can be more confusing than helpful. Designing a portal with *low effort portal design*, *simple navigation patient portal*, and *clear next step healthcare* guidance is crucial to truly improving patient experience and outcomes.

The Reality of Remote Consultations: Convenience Isn't a Cure-All

Remote consultations have revolutionised access for many patients by removing the need to physically travel to a clinic. This is especially beneficial for those with mobility issues, chronic conditions, or who live far from medical centres. However, it's important to remember that **remote consultations remove travel but do not replace assessment**.

Brain fog—a common symptom across many conditions such as chronic fatigue, long COVID, and neurological disorders—can impair memory, concentration, and decision-making. When someone is foggy-headed, rapid or complex online booking flows become a hurdle rather than a help.

Clinics often assume that the fastest path to a booked consultation equals better service. But **booking speed is not the same as care quality**. Patients need support, reassurance, and clear direction, not just automation that gets them through the form quickly.



What happens when something goes wrong?

Imagine a patient trying to navigate a busy portal menu while struggling to focus. If they can't find how to change a booking or ask a question, frustration piles up. This is where clinics lose patients or create avoidable delays in care. Therefore, portals must offer not only speedy functions but accessible, human-centred design.

Designing Portals for People with Symptoms and Brain Fog

Successful patient portals for users with cognitive symptoms rely on a few key principles:



- **Low effort portal design:** Minimal steps and clear, jargon-free language.
- **Simple navigation patient portal:** Logical menus, large clickable buttons, and easy to understand options.
- **Clear next step healthcare:** Guidance on what to do next, including when to expect contact or how to get additional help.
- **Accessible human help:** Prominent contact options to reach real people.

1. Keep Booking Screens Exceptionally Simple

Online booking screens often prioritise gathering information over guiding the patient smoothly. To support users with brain fog:

1. **Limit choices per screen.** Avoid overwhelming the user with too many questions or options.
2. **Use plain language.** Avoid medical jargon or technical terms. For example, use “book a video chat with your doctor” instead of “schedule a telemedicine consultation.”
3. **Visual cues help navigation.** Big buttons, clear progress bars, and confirmation prompts reduce uncertainty.
4. **Offer a “Help me book” option.** This could initiate a live chat or a callback, reducing the cognitive load.

Example: Instead of a single page asking for symptoms, preferred times, and contact details all at once, break the process into clear, <https://techonthego.co.uk/2026/09/online-consultations-to-portable-devices-the-technology-changing-at-home-treatment-31929> digestible steps with simple questions and large “next” buttons.

2. Incorporate Clear Guidance on Next Steps

Many patients leave a booking portal unsure what will happen next. People with symptoms and brain fog especially benefit from concise, reassuring information.

- Confirm their booking immediately with clear summary details.
- Explain what happens before the consultation (e.g., “You will receive a video link by email 10 minutes before your appointment”).
- Advise when to seek urgent care if symptoms worsen.
- Provide instructions for how to reschedule or cancel with ease.

Such clarity reduces anxiety and prevents patients from repeatedly trying to call or rebook out of uncertainty.

3. Make Video Consultations Truly Accessible

Video calls remove travel barriers but introduce digital ones. Brain fog may cause confusion about how to join a call or navigate audio/video settings.

To improve accessibility:

- Send simple, step-by-step joining instructions well in advance, preferably in plain language and with screenshots or short videos.
- Include a test call option to check the system works before the appointment.
- Ensure the platform allows easy connection through common devices (smartphones, tablets, laptops) without complicated downloads.
- Offer a phone consultation alternative for those who cannot manage video due to cognitive or technological challenges.

4. Provide Easy Access to Human Help at Every Stage

Nothing frustrates patients more than feeling trapped in an automated system unable to escalate to a person.

Key considerations for human support:

- **Visible, simple contact options:** Phone numbers or chat buttons should be clearly visible at all steps.
- **Prompt responses:** Long waits or unanswered queries defeat the purpose of human help.
- **Multiple channels:** Some may prefer phone calls, others instant messaging, so offering choices helps.

This human access is essential for patients experiencing brain fog who may need to ask clarifying questions or receive reassurance.

Accessibility for Less Tech-Confident Patients

Not all patients have the same digital skills, and symptoms like brain fog only widen the gap. Designing portals with inclusivity in mind means:

- Providing alternative access routes such as phone bookings or in-person help desks.
- Using large fonts, simple colour schemes, and high contrast to aid readability.
- Testing the portal with target users, including those with cognitive impairments, to gather real feedback.
- Keeping forms short and only asking for essential information, reducing cognitive strain.

Table: Portal Features and Benefits for Patients with Brain Fog

Feature	Benefit	Example
Step-by-step booking flow	Reduces overwhelm, easier task completion	Booking form split into 3 simple pages with clear progress
Plain language instructions	Improves comprehension, avoids confusion	"Book a video call with your GP" instead of "Schedule teleconsultation"
Clear next steps guidance	Prevents anxiety about what happens next	Confirmation message detailing appointment time and joining instructions
Visible human contact options	Allows users to get help quickly if stuck	Phone number and chat button on every page
Multiple appointment formats	Caters for different tech abilities and symptoms	Option to choose phone or video consultation

Final Thoughts: Patient Portals Should Empower, Not Exhaust

Clinics must recognise that patients with symptoms like brain fog need portals that prioritise ease, clarity, and human connection over raw efficiency. **Low effort portal design** and **simple navigation patient portal** features

can transform the difference between lost patients and effective care.

Remember, a portal is part of the care journey, not a checklist item for speed. When it guides patients clearly with **clear next step healthcare** information and offers help whenever needed, everyone benefits—patients receive better outcomes and clinics deliver higher quality care.

So next time you evaluate your clinic's digital patient interface, ask:

- What happens when someone with brain fog tries to use this portal?
- Can they quickly get help if confused?
- Does the booking flow prioritise clarity and support rather than just speed?
- Are video consultations accessible and fully explained?

Designing with these questions in mind creates portals that truly serve the patients who need them most.