Advanced Practitioner Physiotherapist (APP) as first point of contact in a GP cluster in Lanarkshire

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Pilot Aim

- To assess the effectiveness of Advanced Practitioner Physiotherapist (APP) as first point of contact in a GP cluster in Lanarkshire.
- GP Practices are under significant pressure as demands for health services rise with musculoskeletal conditions (MSK) accounting for up to 30% of their caseloads (1)
- There is a recognised UK wide shortage of GPs: utilisation of an Advanced MSK Physiotherapist (APP) is a safe and cost effective alternative (2)
- This pilot within a GP cluster in East Kilbride is funded by The Primary Care Transformation Fund and supports Scottish Government Health Policy Initiative (3)

Objectives

- Release of GP time
- Provision of high quality, rapid access to MSK physiotherapy assessment, diagnosis and management
- Promote patient self-management of acute conditions
- Prevention of future chronicity
- Improve the quality and appropriateness of onward referrals to physiotherapy services and orthopaedics
- Possible reduction in prescribing costs and unnecessary imaging

The Patient Journey

1. Receptionist asks the patient for this information using a scripted response
2. Patient is offered an ‘on the day’ or within 48 hours appointment
3. Patient attends a 20 minute appointment with the APP
4. Screened for Non MSK and serious pathologies. Assessment, MSK diagnosis and management plan. Plan may include exercise programme, lifestyle, wellbeing and physical activity advice and signposting to community services
5. Onward referral as appropriate to; Physiotherapy Services, Podiatry, Orthotics, A&E, Orthopaedics. APP request for plain X-Ray imaging of peripheral joints
6. Open review with APP, or advice and discharge.
7. Request for urgent GP review, GP prescribing, blood investigations

Patient Feedback

- Excellent! service
- I was offered really useful advice and reassurance.
- Delighted to have appointment so quickly.
- Quick and smooth process!

Next Stage

- Measurable impact of service on all stakeholders
- Evidence of reduced demand and freeing up of GP time
- Continued audit of all aspects of service, including patient feedback, GP practice satisfaction (GPs, ANPs, reception staff)
- Determine impact on core services (Physiotherapy, Orthopaedics, Radiology)

Key Learning Points

- Establish strong communication links with Practice Manager and Reception Staff… they are your gatekeepers!
- Plan project well ahead
- Greater emphasis on training for APPs, including the establishment of a mentoring support system with GP colleagues
- IT infrastructure set up
- Dedicated room within GP practice preferable
- Ensure GP colleagues are fully engaged and on-board

Progress so far (6 month data)

- 878 Appointments Booked to Date

Key Reference Material

- Text in Citation(s) and Figure(s) from the document.