

## **PhysioNow: A Digital Physiotherapy Solution**

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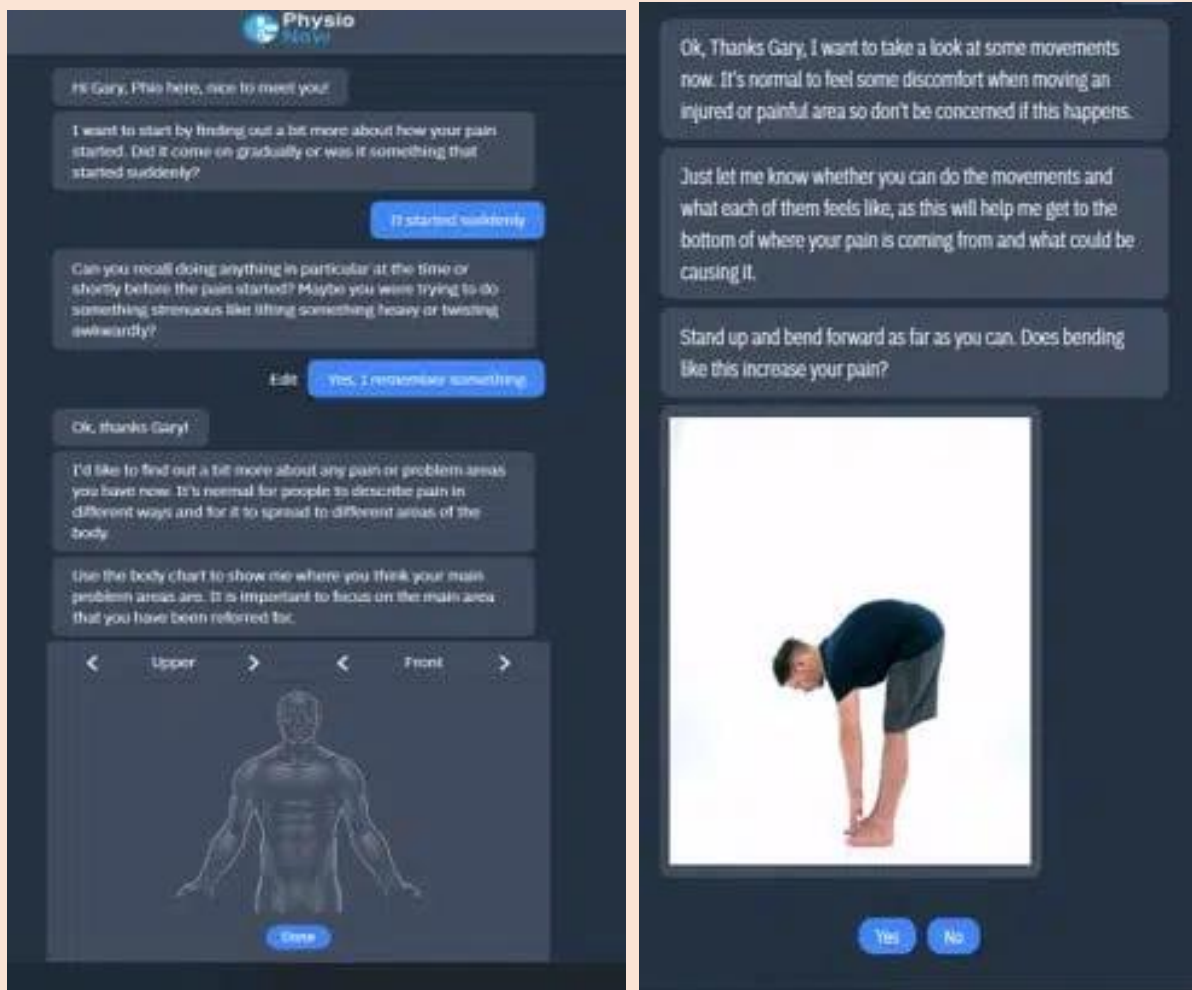
*Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board & Hywel Dda University Health Board*

In partnership with:

*Welsh Government, Life Sciences Hub Wales, EQL and PhysioSpace Cardiff*

### **Background**

PhysioNow is a clinically led chat-bot providing an agile and remote triage and support tool for musculoskeletal (MSK) conditions. Clinically developed and constantly reviewed sophisticated algorithms guide users to the appropriate pathway, enabling the right care, at the right time, from the right person.



**Figure 1**

A series of text messages reading:

- Incoming text: Hi Gary, Phil here, nice to meet you! I want to start by finding out a bit more about how your pain started. Did it come on gradually or was it something that started suddenly?
- Outgoing text: It started suddenly
- Incoming text: Can you remember doing anything in particular at the time or shortly before the pain started? Maybe you were trying to do something strenuous like lifting something heavy or twisting awkwardly?
- Outgoing text: Yes, I remember something.
- Incoming text: Ok, thanks Gary! I'd like to find out more about any pain or problem areas you have now. It's normal

for people to describe pain in different ways and for it to spread to different areas of the body. Use the body chart to show me where you think your main problem areas are. It is important to focus on the main area that you have been referred for.

- Outgoing text uses an image to locate pain.
- Incoming text: Ok, thanks Gary, I want to take a look at some movements now. It's normal to feel some discomfort when moving an injured or painful area so don't be concerned if this happens. Just let me know whether you can do the movements and what each of them feels like, as this will help me get to the bottom of where your pain is coming from and what could be causing it. Stand up and bend forward as far as you can. Does bending like this increase your pain?

End of description.

Users can remotely access an initial assessment 24/7 in multiple languages from anywhere. Connect Health use PhysioNow nationally in England and worked with Wales Government and Life Sciences to deliver PhysioNow to over 1000 patients in two Health Boards in Wales. **The results indicate up to £1 million per annum can be saved across Wales.**

## **Project Aims**

Our partnership aimed to deliver a digital solution to allow MSK conditions to continue to be managed throughout Covid. We wanted to provide high quality, evidence-based assessment for MSK patients during the pandemic and beyond.

As part of this work, we wanted to assess the positive impact PhysioNow could have on:

- Patients

- Clinicians
- The wider healthcare system

## **Problems we aimed to address**

Owing to Covid there have been delays to patients accessing services creating a significant accumulation in demand for MSK services.

By delivering and implementing tools such as PhysioNow, there is a significant opportunity to help and support colleagues in general practice and secondary care, to the betterment of patients.

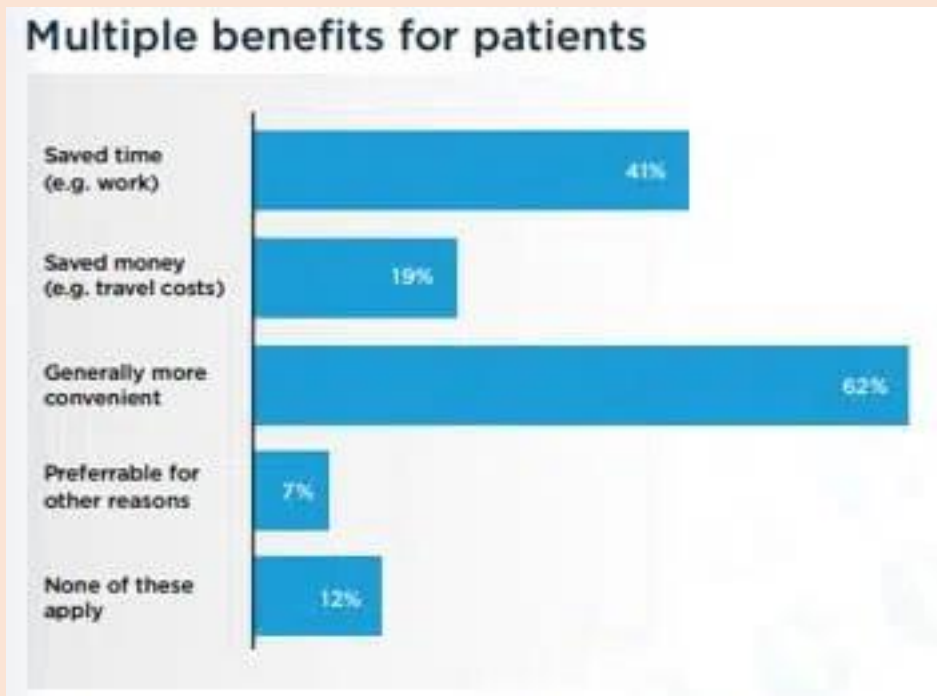
## **Challenges**

We had some initial challenges as operational and clinical staff in both Health Boards were redeployed to Covid battle Covid based activities. Once these pressures began to ease, we were able to use PhysioNow and achieve some of the fantastic results evidenced below.

## **The Results**

### **Patients**

81% of respondents would recommend PhysioNow to their friends and family. Some of the key words repeatedly used by patients are below. The bar graph shows some of the reasons why so many patients loved using Physio



**Figure 2**

A chart titled "Multiple benefits for patients":

- Saved time e.g., work: 41%
- Saved money e.g., travel costs: 19%
- Generally, more convenient: 62%
- Preferable for other reasons: 7%
- None of these apply: 12%

End of description.



**Figure 3**

A word cloud containing the words: brilliant, thorough, happy, fantastic, convenient, advancement, fast, home, recommend, efficient, easy, quick, great, new, useful, future, professional, helpful, professional, helpful, safe, improvement, excellent, straightforward

End of description.

### **The wider healthcare system**

The introduction of PhysioNow into an average sized Health Board with standard physiotherapy activity has the potential to create efficiency and productivity improvements of over

£300,000 per annum. **If implemented across Wales, the benefit would reach well over £1 million per year.**

34% of patients completed PhysioNow outside 09:00-17:00 including weekends and Bank holidays when typically, MSK physiotherapy appointments are unavailable.

This ability to provide around the clock assessment and guidance to patients has numerous benefits:

- No need to sacrifice work or family time to attend appointments
- Patients benefit from a safety perspective as well as convenience.

### **Patient Feedback**

"It's brilliant as it's easy to answer and how to point out where the pain is coming from."

"I had to put off going to see my GP, so this was an excellent prompt to investigate my pain."

"I thoroughly applaud your work, very well done. Even if and/or when Covid is no longer an issue this is definitely the way for the future in terms of triage and audio/visual."

"For me it was very positive and helpful. Worth considering as a long-term help to ease the pressure in the service."

### **Feedback from Key Stakeholders**

"PhysioNow is a great example of how we can enable patients to access services from a device when and where they wish to. Covid-19 has pushed us all to think differently, and this project has demonstrated the level of impact that can be achieved in a short timeframe."

*Abi Phillips, Head of Innovation – Economy Skills & Natural Resources Group, Welsh Government*

"PhysioNow is bringing benefits to our team of physiotherapists, providing important information about a patient's condition before they even set foot in the clinic and helping us to streamline our services and treat those patients most in need."

*Zoe Brewster, Assistant Head of Physiotherapy, Cwm Taf Morgannwg Health Board*

“At Connect Health we strive to be at the forefront of innovation and have been very active in the use of digital health to support people during these challenging times. PhysioNow puts patients in the driving seat, empowering them with tools to take ownership of their health.”

*Prof Andrew Walton, Group Executive Director, Connect Health*

## **Next Steps**

PhysioNow is constantly evolving, and the ‘self-management’ outcome is one such area Connect Health are developing extensively and is ready for imminent roll-out. This will empower patients to manage their conditions without the need to directly interact with services where appropriate. A comprehensive suite of resources will be provided to guide patients on the road to recovery and be monitored every step of the way.

The technology underpinning PhysioNow is constantly advancing and a move to a more interactional chatbot experience is also due for forthcoming roll-out. This will enhance the patient experience whilst ensuring PhysioNow remains at the cutting edge of digital technology.

## **Our Exemplar Experience**

We really value the opportunity to showcase our work as a Bevan Exemplar. We all would love to continue to receive the support of the Commission for any future adoption and spread.

## **Contact**

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