

A Digital Solution for Improving Musculoskeletal (MSK) Physiotherapy Access in Swansea Bay University Health Board

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Context and Approach:

In Swansea Bay University Health Board (SBUHB) the Musculoskeletal (MSK) Physiotherapy Department receives referrals from multiple areas. The project aims to review current MSK access pathways and identify if any changes required for patients. If changes are required:

1. Determine what digital systems are available to address any identified deficiencies found with the current access pathway.
2. Implement the system.
3. Compare the service pre and post implementation in terms of waiting times, variation, etc.

Progress to date:

Research:

Following digital mapping of referral pathways and processes into MSK Physiotherapy and an audit of conversion rates from direct triage into core services, it became evident there was variability in waiting times and inequity of face to face appointments for patients accessing the service from primary care. This led to the development of the research question; ***Is the use of digital systems effective in improving the quality of patient care in SBUHB with MSK conditions?***

A task and finish (T&F) group was developed to scope and identify a suitable digital platform. Multiple systems were reviewed. *Booking Lab platform* was chosen to meet the service requirement to enable direct booking of appointment for patients. The procurement of the system was approved and baseline data was collected including:

- Referral numbers and waiting times on different pathways.
- Clinical and administration capacity/ demand.
- Patient satisfaction questionnaire about access into the service.

Leadership:

The T&F team worked with the digital supplier and health services including; Patient Accessibility, Communication, Welsh Department, Digital and Information Governance teams to map, create and implement the digital platform and website developments.

Engagement of MSK team was undertaken using various methods to support workforce remodelling and mobilisation.

Education/teaching:

A presentation of changes to MSK Physiotherapy service access was delivered to the informal cluster and pan cluster meetings. A bulletin was published on the health board intranet site and information shared with the General Medical Services (GMS) to post in their newsletter. Following training of the digital system with the physiotherapy clinical and administration staff, the platform system was introduced using a phased approach to embed and refine over a two month period.

Future Activity:

Further development of the Physiotherapy Department website is underway to provide comprehensive information on self management that aligns with the new MSK service delivery model. An evaluation of the digital platform will be completed to determine; number of referrals, waiting times, patient satisfaction of system and capacity. The data will be analysed to determine impact of platform for potentially upscaling in MSK or use in other areas. The service delivery model will be shared with NHSWE MSK Clinical Interest Group and network.

Reflections:

The project highlighted the benefits of working collaboratively with multiple stakeholders with the skills and abilities to support the implementation process. Although at times this created delays and frustrations, it was evident the importance of embracing others expertise to ensure a robust implementation process was followed to prevent failure.