Back and Neck Pain Triage Physiotherapy Service
Proof of Concept Trial
Ambulatory Care – Orthospinal Clinic

Trish Schlotfeldt
Back and Neck Pain Pathway Triage Physiotherapist
NSLHD Musculoskeletal Integrated Care Initiative
Back and Neck Pain Pathway
Proof of Concept Trial

- NSLHD Musculoskeletal Integrated Care Initiative

- To ensure that the pathway for patients that present with back or neck pain is evidence based and clear

- Lead – Dr Roger Laurent (Rheumatology Dept.)
3 Aspects to the project
Set by the Advisory Committee

• To decrease the time for a patient to receive a surgical opinion

• To ensure the pathway from the Emergency Department into the community is effective and evidence based

• To engage with GPs to facilitate evidence based practice and correct referral paths
Outline a new triage initiative at Royal North Shore Hospital for our orthospinal clinic

- Process of triage
- Physiotherapy intervention
- Outcomes
Value of Triage

Systematic Lit Review of Triage for patients with spinal complaints (excluding ED) (20 studies)  (Mc Evoy et al 2015)

- Wait Times  
  (from 52 months to 6 weeks  (Curley et al 2004)

- Patient satisfaction

- GP satisfaction  
  94% support - continuation of service in Melbourne  
  ( Blackburn et al 2009)

- “Correctly” referred for surgical intervention  
  Improved from 30-95%
Orthospinal Ambulatory Care Clinic

Referrals from GPs - long waiting list

On 11 Jan 2016

– 251 patients

– Waiting time average of 294 days

– Range (619 - 51 days)
Ambulatory care

BNPP Triage Physio began to triage orthospinal clinic waitlist referrals received from Jan 11 2016 in consultation with Dr Nathan Hartin

- Urgent (up to 4 - 6 weeks wait)
- 6 month
- 12 month
- BNPP assessment and management plan
Paper Based Triage Involves Classification:

- Symptoms or Signs of Radiculopathy
- Nonspecific back/neck pain

Request orthospinal appointment

Invited to BNPP Clinic for Assessment and Management plan

- Serious spinal pathology

Updated Guidelines for the Management of Back Pain (Koes 2010)
Appointment with BNPP Triage Physio

- Offered an appointment by our admin assistant - Belinda
- 90 minute session
- Patients asked to fill out questionnaires before they come in
- To bring scan results on the day
Physiotherapy Assessment
Pre Appointment Questionnaires

Designed an Individualised Questionnaire
- describe their symptoms
- functional limitations
- previous treatment
- red flag screening questions
Screening

- Psychological factors associated with poor prognosis and increase in chronicity

- Stratified care - Use of screening tools to help identify those at risk of becoming chronic
  - Orebro (Short form) From Australia (Linton 2011)
  - STarT Back from The UK (Hill 2011)
Physiotherapy Assessment
Pre Appointment Questionnaires

Patient Reported Measures

Orebro - stratification tool to ascertain the risk of developing disability due to pain

Aqol - Quality of life index

NPRS - Pain

Back pain  Neck pain

Waddell Fear Avoidance  Neck disability Index

Roland Morris
Assessment – 2 Physiotherapists

- Holistic assessment
  - including full neurological assessment

- Discussion with patient regarding findings
  - Reassurance ++
  - Discuss imaging findings (often incidental)
  - Adopt a biopsychosocial approach for most patients
  - Surgical or non surgical options
Intervention

- Advice and Reassurance
  - Motion is Lotion!
  - Postural correction
  - Increase activity suggested
  - Correct analgesia use acc to prescription
  - Pain reduction strategies

- Gentle active range of motion exercises
Resources provided

- Personalised exercise/activity sheet
- Walking program information sheet
- Literature
  - Depending on the assessment
- Video link or Podcast
  - Depending on the assessment
Book a Second Visit in Approx 50% of patients assessed (2-4 weeks)

- If they have NSLBP
- If they do not want surgery
- To ascertain response to therapy
- Reinforce messages
- To confirm the pathway
Pathway recommended:

- Referral to Specialist
  - Orthospinal clinic
  - Rheumatologist or other specialist

- Pain Service - RNSH or local

- Physio RNSH or local

- Hydro

- Exercise class/Get Healthy/ EP/Gym/ Stepping on etc
Letter to GP

- Detailed letter to GP with recommended pathway within a week
- GP Satisfaction survey
Results of 470 Patients Triaged - Orthospinal Clinic 11 Jan – 30 Sept 2016

- Orthospinal Clinic appointment: 241 patients
- Triage Physiotherapy assessment: 211 patients
- Mistriaged: 18 patients
BNPP Physiotherapy Assessment

Number of patients

- Attended Initial Physio Appointment: 132
- Referred for orthopsinal opinion after seeing Triage Physio: 35 (26%)
Outcomes following BNPP Physiotherapy Assessment

- Referral to other specialist: 11
- Discharged to GP: 71
- Ortho spinal: 35

NSW Government
Northern Sydney Local Health District
Further outcomes as a result of BNPP Physiotherapy Assessment and Treatment

- Stepping on Program: 1
- Private Rehabilitation post Op: 1
- Vestibular Specialist: 1
- OACCP: 1
- Orthotist: 2
- Womens health physiotherapist: 2
- Psychologist: 2
- Get Healthy: 2
- Dietician: 2
- Ex Phys: 3
- Ex Class: 7
- Chronic pain clinic: 14
- Physio local: 15
- Hydrotherapy: 16
- Physio RNSH: 31

Number of referrals
Waiting times:
251 patients were on the “historic” waitlist on 11 Jan 2016 - Some since June 2014

Average wait to see orthospinal surgeons from date of GP referral
Average waiting time to see orthospinal surgeons after triage
Average wait time to access service on the orthospine waitlist – Decreased from **294** days

![Bar chart showing wait times for different stages of care](chart.png)

- **BNPP Physio:** 21 days
- **Orthospinal appointment after BNPP Physio assessment:** 61 days
- **Orthospinal appointment:** 82 days
### Administrative Staff in the Ambulatory Care Department Booking Unit

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*Updated 25 July 2016*
# Administrative Staff in the Ambulatory Care Department Booking Unit

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## Patient Characteristics

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### BNPP Physio Patients
Initial Patient Reported Outcomes

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<tr>
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<th>Orebro score /100</th>
<th>Roland Morris /24</th>
<th>Waddell Fear Avoidance Pain/24</th>
<th>Waddell Fear Avoidance Work/42</th>
<th>Neck Disability Index (%)</th>
<th>Numeric Pain Rating Scale /10</th>
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BNPP Physio Patients
Numeric Pain Rating Scale /10

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MCID for Low back pain 2.2 points – Childs et al 2005
MCID for Chronic pain 1.7 points – Farrar et al 2001
BNPP Physio Patients
Roland Morris Questionnaire

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Roland Morris Questionnaire</th>
<th>% Positive improvement</th>
<th>% Negative improvement</th>
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<td>IQR75</td>
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30% Improvement - clinically significant, (Jordan et al 2006)
BNPP Physiotherapy Patient Outcomes
Surgical vrs Conservative management

- Conservative management: 119
- Surgical outcome: 4
- Possible surgical outcome: 3

NSW Government Health
Northern Sydney Local Health District
Overall Management of Patients referred to Orthospinal Clinic

Surgical Management
4.6%

346

16
Are patients satisfied with this service?

Patient satisfaction survey after 3 months

– Including Aqol and 1 Patient subjective measure
  – Roland Morris (Back)
  – Neck disability index (Neck)
Patient Evaluations - Sent to patients 3 months post initial assessment

I feel satisfied that I was assessed by a specialist physiotherapist as a way of checking whether I needed to see a doctor for a surgical opinion for my back or neck problem.

- Strongly disagree: 1 patient
- Disagree: 3 patients
- Neither agree nor disagree: 17 patients
- Agree: 10 patients
- Strongly agree: 0 patients
Patient Evaluations - Sent to patients 3 months post initial assessment

I was able to access the services or treatments recommended to me

- 1 strongly disagree
- 6 disagree
- 6 neither agree nor disagree
- 17 agree
- 5 strongly agree
I am satisfied that the patient has only been reviewed by the physiotherapist at this stage and that the patient’s issues have been addressed in a satisfactory manner.
General Practitioner Satisfaction Survey

I feel that I will be supported in the future management of this patient

Number of surveys returned

<table>
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<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
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NSW Government  
Northern Sydney Local Health District
Summary Ambulatory Care Involvement

- Triaging patients in the orthospinal clinics from 11 Jan 2016
  - Assessment and management – 45% of pts

- Attending Dr Hartin, Dr Vasili and Dr Gray Clinics
  - See pts on the day 3-4 pts. per clinic - refer to RNSH Physio or other services often outside our facility
In Conclusion

- Initiated a triage service in the orthospinal clinics offering
  - decreasing the average waiting time to see Dr from 294 days to 82 days.....often less.
  - Can be seen by Physio within 2 weeks, increasing appropriate service delivery
- Engaging with the GPs via the letter to them following assessment and informing them of the pathway for their patient
Questions?

Thank you