

Improving Flow in Spinal Outpatients

Damon Burn / Extended Scope Practitioner, Himadeep Venkata, Extended Scope Practitioner, Mr Gabriel Alo, Orthopaedic Spinal Consultant, John O'Regan/ Principal Physiotherapist, Jayne Cox/Deputy Divisional Director of Operations -Surgery (Corporate Services), Tara Rouse/Care Group Support assistant



Introduction

Access to spinal orthopaedic services in Walsall has been delayed for many years despite additional medical resourcing. This has been further impacted by the pandemic causing long term consequences for patients. In late 2022, following discussions with Orthopaedics, Physiotherapy and Outpatient services, a trial was agreed to embed extended physiotherapists in the clinic with the aim of improving access and wait times for appointments.

Methods

Through inter-disciplinary collaboration, continuous QI methodologies have been utilized for 15 months to improve flow across the full patient journey.

Process mapping of all pathway steps and multiple PDCA (Plan do check act) cycles have introduced new patterns of working to ensure patients see the right person, in the right place and at the right time. Each cycle has been prepared by benchmarking against best practice (including NHS GIRFT recommendations and model hospital), interdisciplinary discussion, trialing new systems and then reviewing. These cycles have included;

- Introducing enhanced stratified triage process to ensure patients see most suitable clinician first time
- Developing an urgent physiotherapy pathway
- Developing wait list/data validation process which reviewed 4000 case files
- introduction of virtual follow up post injection clinics

"I was seen quickly and slightly before my appointment time. Damon Burn took the time to listen to my symptoms and gave clear advice. I also received a telephone call today from the department he has referred me to arranging an appointment for later this month. By far the best service I have received. Thank you."

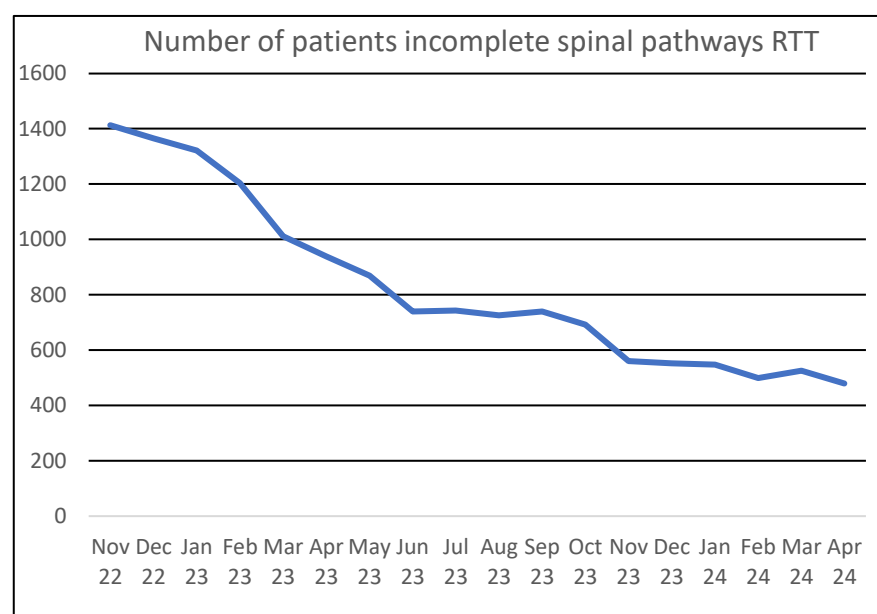
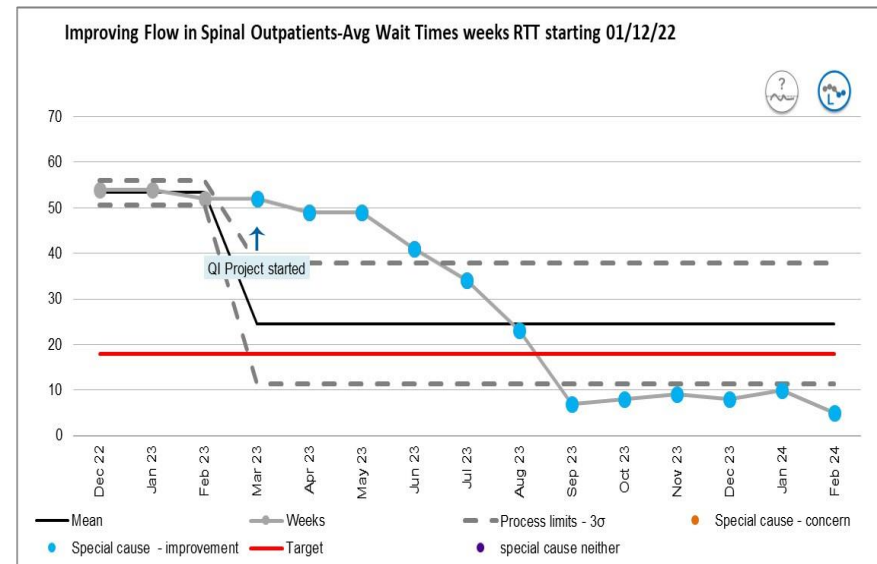
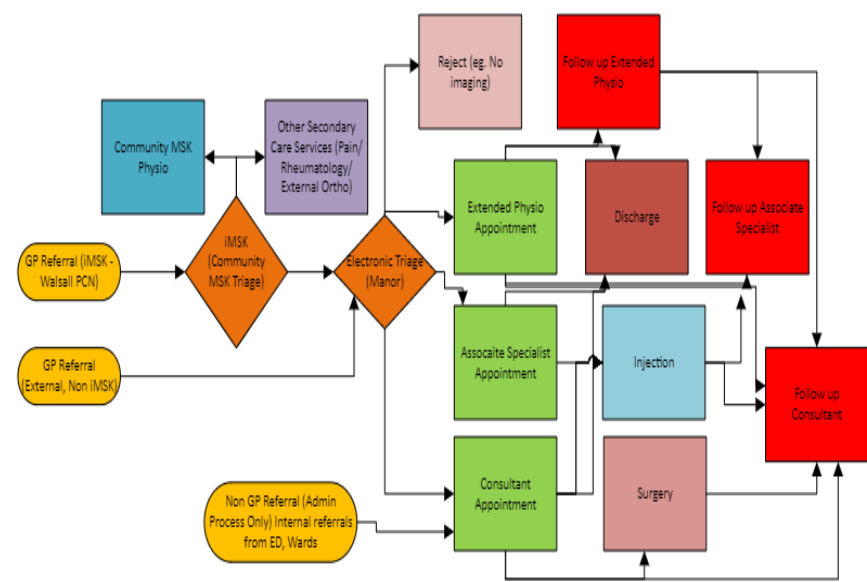
Patient Family & Friends feedback Feb 24

Results

The trial has demonstrated dramatic improvements in wait times for new and follow up appointments. It has also demonstrated significant cost improvements for the organization with approx. 70% of patients referred being managed by extended physiotherapists.

Next Steps

Following the success of the trial, next steps will involve a business case approval of permanency of positions, reallocation of medical resourcing (with increased surgical time) and rolling out this system to other orthopaedic clinics



**Trauma & Orthopaedics,
Outpatient services,
Physiotherapy Department**

Working in partnership
The Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust
Walsall Healthcare NHS Trust