

E-Clinics in Cardiology

a. Strap line

Improve the management of cardiac patients jointly between primary and secondary care.

b. Summary

E-clinics are an innovative way of delivering patient care whereby appropriate cardiac patients who would otherwise be seen by a cardiologist are instead reviewed by their very own GP. The GP sends information securely about the patient consultation electronically to a cardiologist in hospital and the cardiologist provides advice to the GP and patient as necessary.

c. What is the issue?

Evidence suggests that demand for cardiac outpatient appointment in NHS Western has been increasing year on year. The demand for cardiac outpatient appointments is likely to increase as the average age of the local population increases. In order to manage this demand effectively, there is a need for GPs and their consultant colleagues to work more collaboratively together.

d. The Innovation Solution

Patients initially present with cardiac symptoms to their GP and many of these patients must be seen in secondary care. There is however a cohort of patients (estimated to be potentially between 8 – 10%) who can be managed in primary care by their GP with consultant cardiologist support.

By setting up an “e-clinic system”, the GP fills out an electronic template regarding the patient with cardiac symptoms following their GP consultation. The GP sends the information securely about the patient consultation electronically to a cardiologist in hospital and the cardiologist provides advice to the GP and patient as necessary. If the patient needs to be seen by a cardiologist in their clinic, a follow up appointment will be arranged for the patient. This helps manage demand for new outpatient appointments.

It is crucial that data security issues are addressed when setting up such a service. GPs for example require secure email systems such nhs.net accounts to send patient information to the cardiologists.

It is also vital that the template filled out by the GP has the correct information. The template should therefore provide “sign posts” as necessary to the GP of questions or tests that they need to ask or undertake when reviewing a patient.

e. Partnerships and Delivery Team

This project is being led by the Clinical Commissioning Team at NHS Western Cheshire in partnership with the Countess of Chester Hospital NHS Foundation Trust and West Cheshire Health Consortium which is the local GP consortium.

f. Key Benefits

This innovation will enable some patients to avoid attending outpatient clinics and allow the GP to access the expertise of a cardiologist in a fast and timely way. This will help the GP to deliver improved care for their patients.

g. Funding/Return on Investment/Savings

The £5,000 RIF funding will be used to fund communications and marketing activities to promote e-clinics. The activities will consist of:

- Several evening events between cardiologist and GPs.
- Marketing literature to be distributed to GPs.
- Public relations activities to promote the benefits of e-clinics.

Four new appointment slots per week will be replaced with 12 e-clinic slots i.e. allocated time that the consultant cardiologist can review the e-clinic templates and respond. The new e-clinic slots will increase the number of patients that are in effect reviewed by a cardiologist on a weekly basis while at the same time help to manage potential demand for new outpatient appointments.

h. Potential to Scale and Strategy for Sustainability

The project will be initially undertaken as a pilot focussing on managing patients that would have otherwise been referred by their GP to a cardiologist for a new outpatient appointment. It is anticipated however that patients requiring a follow up appointment might be managed through the e-clinic approach in future.

i. Name and Contact Details

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