

Improving the quality of care for patients with breast cancer by the development of a specialised physiotherapy referral pathway

a. Strap line

Improving the quality of care for patients with breast cancer by the development of a Specialised Physiotherapy referral pathway

b. Summary

The innovation will allow development of a musculoskeletal outpatient service designed specifically to provide treatment and rehabilitation of the full range of musculoskeletal problems experienced after surgical and radio-therapeutic treatment of breast cancers. Thus ensuring better care, better health and better life, as guided by the Our NHS Our Future programme

c. What is the issue?

Nice guidance 2009 states although Physiotherapy is widely accepted as beneficial there is variation in protocols across breast units and some areas have no Physiotherapy intervention at all. The National Cancer Action Team (NACT) has developed new breast cancer pathways and our current service falls short of its recommendations, as there is currently no standard pathway for referral to Physiotherapy following breast cancer surgery, despite high incidence of pain and shoulder dysfunction.

Research shows unsupervised rehabilitation is insufficient to regain full shoulder range of movement, which can delay treatment and cause unnecessary distress for patients.

In Salford there are approximately 150 new diagnoses of breast cancer every year. Both Breast Cancer Consultant's within Salford PCT operate on between 2-5 patients each every week. McClean (2010) conducted an audit of current Physiotherapy treatment for patients post mastectomy in Salford. Although this was a small sample size it highlighted a number of barriers to patients accessing the right treatment from the right person at the right time. Patients reported they felt the physiotherapists had not been sensitive to their problems or addressed the issues. The audit results also showed poor clinical outcomes with patients attending for long periods of treatment without any improvement in their condition. The Physiotherapist involved in this innovation has been treating patients using specialist techniques and dramatic results have been produced.

During cancer treatment and rehabilitation, rest is best has been the traditional approach. However low levels of physical activity in patients with cancer result in further de-conditioning and symptoms of fatigue, loss of functional capacity and reductions in quality of life. Inactive patients with cancer may also be at higher risk of secondary tumours and a recent study of breast cancer survivors indicated 50% risk reduction in mortality among those who are regularly active when compared to those with sedentary lifestyle.

d. The Innovation Solution

The innovation is the development and implementation of a specialist Physiotherapy pathway across primary and secondary care for breast cancer patients. This will include patients being seen post-operatively on the ward, specialised outpatient service to address post-mastectomy pain and treat musculoskeletal complaints and the development of exercise group. The innovation has been

developed by a team of Physiotherapists and patients, with input from Breast Consultants and Breast Care Nurses.

Some of the above services are provided at The Christie but not all. This innovation is novel, as patients will be seen in their own locality by the same team throughout their entire care, thus meeting recommendations by the NCAT

e. Partnerships and Delivery Team

The delivery team currently consists of a Specialist Physiotherapist (Karen McClean), with strong links with Anne Kehoe and Cath Fitzsimmons (Breast Care Nurses). Also involved are the Breast Cancer Consultants Miss Saad and Mr Chatterjee, support from Julie Kenyon (Specialist Macmillan Physiotherapist at The Christie) and Kath Bateson (Lymphoedema Specialist at St. Anne's Hospice)

f. Key Benefits

- i) Quality – improved patient experience with regards to accessibility to specialised service, standard referral to Physiotherapy and improved outcomes. The patients will be seen by a Physiotherapist who has specialist skills in treatment post-mastectomy and post-reconstruction complaints, focusing on regaining pre-op range of movement, strength and return to function. This service will lead to reduced delays in accessing services, resulting in speedier resolution of problems and reducing the risk of long-term problems. Close links with Breast Cancer Team and St. Anne's Hospice will allow recognition of potential lymphoedema and cellulitis complaints and appropriate referrals to other services
- ii) Value for money – ensuring efficient use of time and resources within Physiotherapy service
- iii) Prevention – recognising and educating; lifestyle changes associated with good physical health and reducing risk of recurrence. As discussed in the Clinical Pathway Group Reports, the focus will be to ensure wellbeing, prevention and self-care. The Physiotherapist involved is developing her knowledge of lymphoedema and its management, to ensure holistic approach to care. Long term aims of this innovation is to establish an exercise-based rehabilitation programme for patients post breast cancer surgery as part of the latest guidance surrounding survivorship

g. Funding/Return on Investment/Savings

The innovation has been awarded £2000 to allow its development and implementation

h. Potential to Scale and Strategy for Sustainability

Once developed, this service fits into other developments happening in Salford. Namely the 'Chrisites at Salford' project. We are currently looking at funding streams to ensure sustainability of this service

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