

## QuDoS Multiple sclerosis: NHS case studies 2019

### Outstanding MS physician commendation

#### Your name, job title and centre

Dr Jonathan O'Riordan, Consultant Neurologist, Tayside and NE Fife Regional MS Unit

#### Project / initiative name

Multiple initiatives delivered, focussed around the development of the specialist MS service for Tayside

#### Project start date

Services covering ~20 years



#### Challenge

- Tayside has one of the highest incidences of MS in the world, which means that there is a large patient pool for the MS service to cover
- Originally there was no specialist MS service, which meant a lack of diagnosis and communication with patients about their diagnosis; there were also few treatment options other than episodic steroids
- Delivery of preventative treatment in a safe and appropriate environment is a challenge; healthcare professionals should be conscious of the potential for multiple interactions with polypharmacy

#### Solution

- The specialist MS service was developed and a multi-disciplinary team on-boarded (physiotherapist, social worker, MS coordinator etc.)
- The service has championed a patient-centred approach by focussing on improvements in patient quality of life, relapse prevention and providing access to palliative care.
- Identification of specific patient population needs allowed for creation of tailored services, such as the rollout of a dedicated pelvic health clinic
- Treatment focuses on symptom management by offering options such as acupuncture, lidocaine infusions, access to hyperbaric chambers and home physiotherapy

## Solution cont...

- There has been exploration of non-drug means of symptom control through a balance of pharmaceutical means and non-pharmaceutical means
- Preventative strategies have been implemented; for example, clinics and educational events are held on topics such as acute relapse, lower urinary-tract dysfunction, pain management and spasticity management
- A collaborative approach to patient care has been introduced by scheduling regular multi-disciplinary team meetings, encouraging regular communication between team members and encouraging team discussion
- A pharmaceutical monitoring service has been developed for patients on DMTs (to ensure management of symptoms)
- Lastly, there has been a focus on clinical research (eg, MS epidemiology, the application of MRI for clinical and prognostic purposes, MS prevalence, symptomatic therapies such as cannabinoids and preventative therapy); this has helped to inform strategies for managing symptoms in real-world practice

## Results

- There is now a cohesive specialist MS service treating upwards of 1,400 patients
- The service is patient-oriented, providing holistic care with a multi-disciplinary team that is responsive to patient needs
- Patient interactions are increasing; daily clinics are now being run and they have received positive feedback
- The service has repeatedly attained high levels of achievement in all national standards
- The holistic approach to treatment has empowered patients to better manage their symptoms and reduce pharmacological medication overuse

## Next steps

The team is currently working in collaboration with the Scottish National Ballet to set up ballet classes for MS patients (aiming to start in the Spring of 2020); the effects of these classes will be monitored in terms of symptom improvement, positive social impact, and pain and fatigue reduction, with the aim of determining whether these factors influence the requirements for pharmacological medication use.

The team will also continue to focus on symptom prevention and relapse management, whilst also looking at how to address unmet patient needs that are specific to deprived areas.

Lastly, there are plans in place to expand the work related to the pelvic health clinic, whilst monitoring its use and benefit for continuous optimisation.

## What have been the biggest challenges?

Firstly, providing relapse-prevention therapy in a safe manner is a high priority and, secondly, meeting patient expectations is a continuous challenge.

## How did you overcome these challenges?

To ensure safe provision of preventative therapy, the team has put in place a mechanism whereby treatment provision is monitored very closely. A comprehensive patient database has been set up with recommended monitoring timeframes and patient results (each with recommended parameter values); this has allowed a greater understanding of the different therapies being used and the patient's individual suitability. Plus, it ensures that everyone on the team is kept up to date on what to look for out for and how to respond to different patient results.

Meeting patient expectations regarding relapse prevention has improved due to symptom management and relapse prevention strategies (outlined above). Expectations in terms of disability progression are managed by increased team awareness of what can realistically be achieved, the limits of different treatments, and careful consideration of whether medication will be worthwhile (ie, in terms of benefit versus side effects).

## What would be your advice to others wanting to replicate this work?

- A multi-disciplinary team approach is important; developing a flexible team that is responsive to patient needs, open to new treatments and ideas, and that has good communication and listening skills, is critical
- Specialist MS nurses are valuable in the development of a working team and should be brought on-board, where possible
- Establish two-way trust between all team members and aim to create a working environment that allows for open discussion; each team members' opinion should be valued

## Testimonial quote

“  
from a  
colleague

Dr O'Riordan strives to provide the best patient care possible... Tayside has one of the highest incidences of MS in the UK and Dr O'Riordan prioritises his clinical work, ensuring that every new MS patient is seen quickly and receives personal clinical care. He has been responsible for developing the multi-disciplinary team and training all new MS nurse specialists and speciality doctors. Throughout, Dr O'Riordan has been innovative in his ideas for broadening the MS service, thus ensuring the MS patients in Tayside receive patient-centred holistic care.”

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