

## QuDoS Multiple sclerosis: NHS case studies 2019

### Innovation in practice

#### Your name, job title and centre

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#### Project / initiative name

Relapse management pathway

#### Project start date

June 2018



#### Challenge

1. When the current team inherited the service, there was no defined pathway on managing relapse.
2. This lack of a written process meant that some patients were not receiving timely care. Patients who thought they were having a relapse would call the service, and the MS team would ask them to take a urine sample to their GP. It could take anything up to 10 days to diagnose an infection and initiate antibiotics or decide upon alternative treatment.
3. These problems were compounded by the team's rapidly expanding geographical patch, and the associated uptick in caseload.

#### Solution

At RWT we worked innovatively and in collaboration with other services to expand our capabilities as an MS Nurse Service. Put simply – we squeezed every ounce of willingness, goodwill and energy from other health professionals. Using best practice guidance, we harnessed this support to create treatment pathways. The relapse pathway is one example of these documents which have given structure to our services.

1. The team mapped out a relapse management pathway based on the MS Trust's Eight Steps to Managing Relapse and the NICE guidance.

## Solution cont...

2. To speed up access to care, the team made links with the local community-based Rapid Intervention Team (RIT). The MS team now refer suspected relapse patients to RIT, which is made up of advanced specialist nurses, who carry out a home visit. This usually happens within four hours. RIT nurses either rule out infection, or, if they are unable to do this, collect blood/urine samples.
3. The team sought and were granted governance approval for the pathway.

## Results

1. The link with RIT has reduced the time it takes to diagnose an infection from 10 days to overnight.
2. Relapses and potential relapses are dealt with quickly and effectively.
3. The pathway has standardised the service's approach to relapse management.

## Next steps

The relapse pathway was just the start for the RWT MS team. We have also produced a dysphagia pathway and have many more processes we wish to formalise in the coming months.

These include working with obstetrics and gynaecology colleagues on a pathway for pregnant women with MS, and with tissue viability nurses on a pathway to prevent pressure ulcers.

Ultimately, we would like to formalise all our processes into "one pathway to rule them all", or 'global' overview of the service.

## What was the biggest challenge?

One issue we had was ensuring the service covered Cannock, an area which was taken on by RWT quite recently and doesn't have the same RIT community services as we have here in Wolverhampton.

This was a challenge as we wanted services to be fair and equitable across areas, even though some people didn't have access to the same team.

## How did you overcome the challenge?

To overcome this, we spoke to the team at Cannock Hospital, where there is a minor injuries and walk-in centre. After negotiating with the sister on the ward, we now have an arrangement where patients can attend the walk-in centre if they think they are having a relapse and staff there will screen for infection and collect the sample.

Although it's not an exact replica of the service we can offer in Wolverhampton, it is still infinitely faster than us trying to get patients to send their samples to GPs.

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

Firstly, go looking for the services in your trust that you might be able to work with and use them. They tend to be just as keen on joint working as you are.

Also, remember that it's a long process and you have to keep at it. When you send off your first email to say that you are interested in doing X, Y and Z it might be a month before you get an answer. Sometimes, you don't get an answer at all until you send six emails. Keep plugging away because it is worth it.

- The RWT MS Nurse team are happy to share their pathways with fellow services. Please contact [rwh-tr.msnurses@nhs.net](mailto:rwh-tr.msnurses@nhs.net)

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