

## QuDoS Multiple sclerosis: NHS case studies 2019

### Outstanding MS nurse finalist

#### Your name, job title and centre

Iris Hume, MS Nurse, South Eastern Trust

#### Project / initiative

Set up of a new MS service

#### Project start date

Initial launch of MS service in January 2017



#### Challenge

1. Setting up a completely new MS service where previously there had been none was the main challenge
2. There was a lack of understanding of MS and the specific needs of MS patients, particularly in other medical teams; for example, fatigue in MS was not well understood by either MS patients or other healthcare professionals, despite how overwhelming and disabling it can be for a patient
3. Patient expectations and perceptions were also a challenge

#### Solution

1. 'Newly diagnosed' MS courses, and progressive MS days have been rolled out to increase awareness and aid understanding
2. There have also been MS society courses in fatigue management and progressive MS, with high attendance from healthcare professionals
3. Patient accessibility was a key target in developing the new service; the team now keep one appointment slot available at the end of each day so that acutely unwell patients can be helped quickly
4. A telephone clinic was also rolled out – patients are able to ring the secretary and are given a date and time when they will be called back; this means that patients are able to better plan the rest of their day without waiting by the phone. They are also given the telephone number that will call so that patients can recognise the caller; there is an email address for more general patient queries too

## Solution cont...

5. An audit was conducted that identified key areas of unmet patient need (eg, fatigue management); this meant that meant the team were able to focus on areas identified as of relevance to their patients.

## Results

1. The telephone service was found to be reassuring to patients because it gave them a specific time to schedule in their call with an MS team member (eg, MS nurse)
2. The end-of-day appointment slot was also reassuring to patients because it meant that they knew if they suddenly felt unwell then they wouldn't have a long wait to see someone; this level of accessibility avoids stressful situations for MS patients and family members
3. Other access options were also found to be reassuring to patients and their families – the patients felt that they were able to get help when they needed it
4. The 'newly diagnosed' course was particularly successful in terms of providing more information for patients and sign-posting them to other organisations that could help; patients also fed back that it helped avoid feeling isolated, gave them an opportunity to make new friends in the MS community / meet the MS nurses and prompted sharing of useful information
5. As a result, patients were better able to self-refer to other services and had more confidence in asking for help or extra support.

## Next steps

There are plans to conduct more audits and provide more courses, plus get more involved in the education of both patients and other healthcare professionals.

There are also plans to set up a website so that patients can be more easily sign-posted to other services that they might need.

## What was the biggest challenge?

Creating a new service completely from scratch was a huge challenge.

## How did you overcome the challenge?

The team just stuck their head down and tried stuff out! Having a supportive team behind you is crucial, plus the management team at the South Eastern Trust have been fantastic.

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

- Take your time – you need to crawl before you can walk and walk before you run! Don't do too much too soon; it's better to do it right rather than rush in
- Involve someone who is good with IT – electronic records are useful for multi-functional team working and cross-team communication.

## Testimonial quote



from a patient

I just wanted to thank you for my care during my recent bout of unwellness. Your regular phone calls make me feel supported and cared for during this unnerving time. It was reassuring to know a health professional was monitoring my condition and my family were pleased to know of this too."

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