

QuDoS in MS Recognition Programme Judges' Special Award Winner

Your name, job title, and centre:

Del Thomas, lead MS CNS and Neuro CNS manager, Wye Valley NHS Trust

Project / initiative name:

Hereford MS MDT Team



Del Thomas (right), Hereford MS MDT Team being presented their award by **Christine Singleton** (far right), Consultant Physiotherapist (FES), West Midlands Rehabilitation Centre (chair of judging panel)

Challenge

- Herefordshire is a large, rural county with an ageing population and substantial MS patient cohort. Yet, the area has very few specialist services and relies on a general neurologist who attends the county weekly from the QE Hospital in Birmingham.
- An unmet need existed for a multidisciplinary team that could work with commissioners and the health community to develop local approaches to MS care.

Solution

We've established a core community-based, non-medical model MS team, comprising two MS nurses, an MS occupational therapist (OT), and an MS co-ordinator, plus a wider multidisciplinary team (MDT), which includes neuro OT, neuro-physiotherapy, speech and language therapists, dieticians, and wheelchair services.

Within collaborative MDT sessions, the whole team comes together to discuss patients of concern, plan joint working/home visits and case conferences, and plan newly diagnosed sessions, FACETS courses, and exercises.

The whole MDT has been involved in developing a local website, which is a well-being hub full of information for those living with MS and their families.

While other allied health professionals and GPs access the information, it's ultimately local services with local clinicians giving advice about the local centre.

Results

I did a few interviews with patients recently about the value of services, and one patient said very clearly that they'd had a relationship with the nurse, the OT, and the physio. They knew the direction of when I was doing the referrals and that they were going to have a burst of treatment and then come back to me. He knew we were all communicating with each other.

When we had all spoken to him independently, he knew that we'd had a multidisciplinary team meeting, and he felt that we had a really cohesive approach to his planned care. Everyone was communicated to within that, and he was really reassured by that. If we take that approach, it permits people to dip in and out, and they have the confidence that we'll react in an appropriate way.

Next steps

There is always an evolving element to a website. Recently, we worked with the web designers to build a strapline for breaking news.

Now that it's up and running, we have a working party group meeting four times a year, and everyone has a role and a responsibility to go through each section and build on it, just add things.

That's a huge amount of people, including speech and language therapists, dieticians, the patients themselves, and the third sector charity. There's a lot of input, and there are a lot of links to external stuff nationally. Shift.ms has written pieces for us, MS Together, as well as the MS Trust, but there's also the pregnancy registers and the tissue bank. Overall, there's a huge amount of information on the site that needs to be reviewed. I don't want it to just lie stagnant.

“I'm just immensely proud of getting it to the point of it being patient-focused because there has been a challenge along the way.”

Del Thomas
Lead MS CNS and Neuro CNS manager,
Wye Valley NHS Trust

What has been the biggest challenge?

It can be quite a challenge because if somebody's got an idea, some other people don't want to go down that pathway. Some people like to self-read on a Kindle, some people like to read in a booklet, and some people like to see a video, so it's an opportunity to give a variety of formats of information because we know that everyone's so different. The challenges were engaging people to understand the drivers and what the future would look like.

How did you overcome this challenge?

We developed a dedicated section on the website called Patient Stories, where individuals living with MS can share their experiences, such as travelling with a wheelchair or using an intermittent self-catheter, how they've embraced it, and how actually their life has changed since then.

We're not giving advice. We're signposting people. We're giving very basic information on a wide range of things, pointing people to where exercise and places may be around the county, and videos from our physios about a conversation about what exercise is.

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

If it's going to be an internal thing, make friends with your IT team and get them to realise that NHS Digital has an agenda going forward and these types of initiatives eventually are going to lead into the main NHS app. If you were doing it independently like I have, going forward, you have to think about licenses and surrounding fees.

If you've got this vision and you want to do it, you've got to think of how to keep it running after launch because it's not just a one-off thing. It can't stay still. You still have to plough money into it for updates and things like that because technology changes all the time.

Take a break.

Make a cup of something and enjoy an interview with, Del Thomas for winning the Judges' Special Award.



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