

QuDoS in MS Recognition Programme Outstanding Team Winner

Your name, job title, and centre:

Dr Azza Ismail, consultant neurologist, Royal Hampshire Hospital
Daisy Cam, MS specialist nurse, Royal Hampshire Hospital

Project / initiative name:

MS Preconception and Pregnancy Team

Project start date:

2021



Challenge

- Multiple Sclerosis affects individuals at their reproductive age, affecting family planning decisions for the majority of people affected.
- Pregnancy management in MS starts pre-pregnancy, and the decisions we make on treatment with our patients can have long-term implications. We also know that it's really important that we provide personalised care because every patient is different.
- It was apparent that the care of pregnant women with MS was not joined at all. Our patients had to have lots of different appointments with lots of different teams, which needed to then be conversing with each other. We felt that bringing the teams together to have our patients being seen by one team would stop the misinformation and would give them a much better journey through their pregnancies.

Solution

We started off with discussions within our MS team, but then also discussions within the wider neurology team and our management team. In Sheffield, we're very lucky to have a really excellent and established epilepsy maternity service. We thought it would be really nice to adopt the model that's already been around for patients for many years. It's been proven to be very successful.

We personally approached Dr Tessa Bonnet, who is the consultant obstetrician running that clinic, who recognised the importance of this area. From there, we began the clinic as a pilot programme for a few months to see how it performed.

Daisy Cam compiled two different patient leaflets, one for the preconception clinic and then one for the pregnancy clinic, which consultants and nurses could hand out to patients.

We also decided that it would be good to have a checklist that covered the maternity side of things, which would go in their clinical notes. The checklists would cover everything from preconception to appointments when they were pregnant, and also during the postnatal period.

Results

Since the clinic began, 80 patients have been seen by the MS Preconception and Pregnancy Team. We've had really excellent feedback from our patients, both formally and informally. For example, in a patient survey conducted as a part of the service evaluation, the majority of our patients were very satisfied with the clinic and very happy with the outcome.

One of the rewarding parts of this clinic was identifying that quite a significant proportion of patients had difficulty planning their families and had fertility issues. Through this clinic, these issues were identified and addressed. It was nice to see a positive outcome, people who have actually been struggling and then having a baby within a year or 18 months - that was great because many of our patients shy away from talking about this.

Next steps

We would now really like to expand this clinic to reach out to as many patients as we can, particularly at the district general hospitals. This is our next step now, and this is where we're negotiating as to how we can coordinate having this specialist clinic, but across the whole region.

Incorporating maybe a three-monthly menopause clinic alongside the preconception clinic is also something we would be interested in doing because women's health, in general, has been so overlooked for so long. Menopause is a huge aspect of women's lives and can affect them in so many different ways. A lot of the symptoms are very similar to MS symptoms, so that's the next aim, to incorporate menopause care as well.

What has been the biggest challenge?

One of the most challenging aspects was coordinating the time. Because obviously, we all work and have very busy schedules, so it's actually just to find the time to bring this all together into one clinic.

How did you overcome this challenge?

We're very lucky. We do have really excellent members of our management team who actually dedicated the time to coordinate this clinic and to make sure everything is running very smoothly. Without them, we couldn't have done that clinic. So, they're doing a massive, excellent job.

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

I'd encourage all MS specialist centres to try and establish this really rewarding service. If we can do it, I'm sure everyone else can do it. It's very rewarding. It just needs a bit of patience, excellent communication, and a good working relationship with the MS maternity services.

It's also about having good working relationships with your immediate colleagues. Within the MS team itself, having a nurse, a consultant neurologist, and a consultant obstetrician, we all look at things from a very different angle. That mix of professionals is vital.



“Our long-term aim is hopefully to see this as a nationally established service in every centre in the UK.”

Dr Azza Ismail

Consultant neurologist, Royal Hampshire Hospital

Take a break.

Make a cup of something and enjoy an interview with, Dr Azza Ismail and Daisy Cam for winning the Outstanding Team category.



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