

NHS Trafford

GPs ‘click’ with Shared Decision Making

NHS Trafford has been helping busy GPs to provide detailed and localised information for their musculoskeletal (MSK) patients at the touch of a button as part of its Shared Decision Making (SDM) project.

The Trafford team is one of 33 clinical teams across maternity, renal and musculoskeletal specialities currently taking part in the Advancing Quality Alliance’s (AQuA) National Shared Decision Making Collaborative, part of a Government funded national programme which aims to involve patients in making decisions about their care.

Project lead Louise Rogerson decided from the outset to focus the Shared Decision Making project in GP surgeries rather than another setting, and concentrate their work on Osteoarthritic (OA) knee patients.

“We felt a GP surgery is where the decision making process starts, so wanted our focus to be right at the start of the patient journey,” explained Louise, Service Reform Lead for clinical pathways with NHS Trafford.

In Louise’s role she attends MSK patient focus groups and overwhelming feedback was the need for a readily available, simple document outlining all the treatment options available. When she heard about the Shared Decision Making collaborative, Louise felt this would be a perfect fit as a solution to patient demand.

The team also know the time pressures and workloads GPs are under and looked for a way to make information about all the options, benefits and risks readily available and quick to access for the general practitioners.

The team decided to develop an OA knee template, which would sit on the GP’s patient record system. When a patient visits their GP, he/she brings up the template and it acts as a checklist to ensure they have certain information etc. The template also acts as a useful prompt for the GP; it contains different assessments very specific to the clinical condition, and also has prompts to ensure that the GP discusses all the options with the patient as part of the Shared Decision Making process.

“We know GPs already do a lot of Shared Decision Making; this is just a template to help them and make it easier to access all the relevant information, the message to the GPs is we are not asking you to make a decision there and then with the patient; but providing more information which will help them make a more informed choice.” said Louise.

One GP involved with the project added: “In the past we would often have known the patient’s preferences, circumstances or values because we had worked with them over a long period of time as their GP. Nowadays however, patients do not always see the same clinician because the practices are so large or because there are trainee GPs, or locums in the practice, so perhaps we do need to be asking them what their preferences and values are.”

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Louise, whose background is in physiotherapy, also worked closely with Trafford's clinical lead for Shared Decision Making to develop a new customised short decision aid, offering localised information for Trafford patients. A direct link straight to the decision aid is also built into the GP template.

Based on a nationally available decision aid, in addition to details of all the options, pros and cons and side effects, the team added another 'Local options' column to the decision aid.

This provides local information for exercise classes, injection/physiotherapy clinics etc. and the days and times they are held, as well as useful website links for national organisations patients may find helpful. It also helps GPs by containing localised referral information, easily accessible by following a link.

The local option column means patients have all the information they need on local services and they can help make a decision which will fit in with their own lifestyle and personal circumstances by seeing easily which clinics or exercise classes are available at a time to suit them.

A link to the customised decision aid is included in the template on the patient record systems, as well as links to other useful patient information leaflets so GPs can print off a copy during the consultation for the patient.

"It takes the legwork out for both the patient and the GP. A decision may not be made in that appointment, and most patients are not expected to, but it ultimately means a better flow of information through the pathway and a more appropriate referral for the patient," said Louise.

The team also incorporated a Shared Decision Making 'Read code' into the template which means if a GP has used the template, they can click on the code to confirm they have used Shared Decision Making with the patient which is then recorded on the patient's records. GPs can also search across the whole practice for how many patients had been involved with Shared Decision Making in the last week, so the measurement aspect of Shared Decision Making is built in.

In terms of spread and sustainability for the project, Louise has also been working with Trafford's I.T. department to find ways which will enable templates to be emailed to different practices, initially they found emailing the template corrupted the file, but they have now identified a way round it.

"I think Shared Decision Making is great; the idea that it should be a shared decision between doctors and their patients; that we should speak to the patient and make sure they're involved in the decision making," said Dr Marik Sangha, a GP at St John's Medical Centre in Altrincham who took part in the project.

"The training was a good reminder that rather than be prescriptive, we should listen and look at the overall picture.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROJECT:

Web: www.advancingqualityalliance.nhs.uk/sdm

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“However, Shared Decision Making is not always done and patients will probably say they are not always told they could have done this or that, so the idea of Shared Decision Making and spreading the message is really good.”

The St John’s practice also used the Ask 3 Questions* resources as part of its Shared Decision Making project, using posters and leaflets in the surgery. Ask 3 Questions is an AQuA developed resource which encourages patients to take charge of their health consultations by asking three questions: what are my options? What are the pros and cons of each option for me? And how do I get support to help me make a decision that is right for me?

“Patients should be encouraged when they see their GP to ask ‘why’ and ‘what are the options’ because GPs should be challenged, Shared Decision Making will lead to an overall better quality of care.”

* Ask 3 Questions has been adapted with kind permission from the MAGIC programme, supported by the Health Foundation. Ask 3 Questions is based on Shepherd HL, et al. Three questions that patients can ask to improve the quality of information physicians give about treatment options: A cross-over trial. *Patient Education and Counselling*, 2011;84: 379-85.

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