

Optimising MS Nurse Reviews: Shifting Towards a More Patient-Focused Approach

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Introduction

Multiple sclerosis (MS) specialist nurses are the health professionals most consulted about MS and play a vital role in the overall coordination of care. [1]

Our MS service currently conducts 10-11 MS Nurse follow-up clinics per week, which has 345 MS Nurse follow-up slots every four weeks (73% are 20-minute appointments while 27% are 30-minute appointments). These appointments are designed for conducting reviews of patients established on disease-modifying treatments (DMTs) – it involves monitoring potential DMT side effects, treatment compliance, discussing monitoring of blood test results and plan, addressing MS-related symptoms or concerns as well as identifying new or relevant health issues. We also utilize these slots to follow-up on patients who are post-steroid treatment for relapses.

As of mid-September 2023, our MS service has an active patient cohort of 2,645 patients who are prescribed DMTs as part of their MS management [Fig. 1]. Within this cohort, 2,491 patients require MS nurse follow-up appointments as part of DMT surveillance with varying frequency in line with the recommended monitoring protocol for each treatment.

It has been recognised that these follow-up appointments are generally focused on DMT management with less opportunities for patient education or support in managing symptoms. We want to improve the appointment process by implementing a pre-appointment checklist [Fig. 2] to create more time for the MS Nurses to discuss patient-focused concerns. The checklist completed by the patients before their appointments will cover DMT monitoring information. If no further discussion is required about these points, this will allow more time for the MS nurses to discuss patients' needs and MS-related concerns.

Aim and Objectives

Our aim is to improve our service by adopting a more patient-focused approach in our MS Nurse follow up clinics.

Objectives:

- To develop a pre-appointment checklist and implement through the MyCare patient portal by the first quarter of 2024.
- To ensure that at least 80% of MS patients on DMTs complete the checklist before their appointments within 6 months of implementation.

Service Development

The UCLH MyCare app is a patient portal that allows patients to access their health summary and provide information to prepare for upcoming appointments, which works in unison with the Trust's health record system, EPIC. A significant number of our MS patients are actively signed up to the portal.

We aim to provide a more effective and efficient nurse follow-up service by allowing patients to complete the checklist prior to the appointment, where the information is automatically transferred from the MyCare app onto the patient's record on EPIC.

Preparation

- Liaise with the wider MS team to discuss the project and review the pre-appointment checklist
- Ensure the MS nurses will receive the necessary briefing or training as required
- Educate patients on the use and benefits of the checklist during their appointments
- Coordinate with the EPIC team to integrate the approved checklist into MyCare

Implementation

- Initially use the checklist for patients booked into 5 clinics per week for the first month of the pilot.
- MyCare to send reminders to patients 3 working days prior to the appointment to complete the checklist.
- Checklists to be submitted via the patient portal MyCare

Monitoring & Review

- To conduct patient and MS Nurse surveys before and 1 month post implementation
- To discuss the survey results and uptake with the wider MS nursing team
- Re-audit the email service
- To consider looking at number of appointments not attended by patients pre and post implementation

Discussion

Overall, streamlining the appointment process will create more time for the nurses to address pertinent patient-centred issues such as symptom management and issues affecting their quality of life.

Our MS team also runs an email service managed by the MS Nurses. A total of 753 queries were addressed in August 2023 alone. The type of queries varied significantly; the majority relating to DMT management (28%), appointments and care coordination (26%) and MS symptoms and overall health (23%) [Figure 3]. These types of queries are topics that we aim to cover during the scheduled appointment time. This initiative has the potential to improve the email service and reduce the total number of queries received outside of scheduled appointments. The answers provided in the checklist will release more time in the appointment to discuss the patient and provide a chance for better education and reiteration of DMT-related processes and pathways.

As the follow-up appointments become more patient-centred and informative, patients may feel their concerns are proactively addressed therefore reducing the need to send follow-up queries through our email service for clarification or further information.

Between June and August 2023, it was discovered that an average of 6.2% of total follow up appointments per month were not attended by patients. The checklist will also potentially help in decreasing the rate of patients not attending their appointments. As the patient gains more confidence in discussing their concerns with the MS Nurses, this will increase the perceived value of the appointments and view these points of contact as valuable.

It also offers great personal development opportunities for the MS nurses as they gain further experience in assessing and addressing symptoms, relapses and other relevant clinical issues. For the pharmacy service, it will enable pharmacists to work more efficiently as answers generated from the pharmacy-related questions on the checklist will help to streamline the prescription screening process. This will reduce the time required to confirm relevant information required to sign off a prescription, which will release the pharmacist to concentrate on other clinical queries and advice for both patients and the wider team.

Figure 1: Numbers of patients established on DMTs in the NHNN MS Service

Disease Modifying Treatment	Number of patients
Ocrelizumab, Ofatumumab, Natalizumab, Alectuzumab	1289
Cladribine, Teriflunomide, Ponesimod, Fingolimod, Dimethyl Fumarate	921
Glatiramer acetate, Beta interferons	331
Siponimod	104
Total	2,645

Figure 2: Pre-Appointment Patient Checklist



University College London Hospitals
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Pre-Appointment Patient Checklist

Please complete this form accurately in preparation for your follow-up nurse appointment:

- Allergy status: _____
- Current disease modifying treatment (DMT): _____
- When did you start this treatment?: _____
- Are you currently taking your DMT as prescribed? If not, what challenges have you experienced? _____
- Are you experiencing any side effects? _____
- Remaining supply of medication: _____
- Are you taking any other medication? (prescribed/over the counter): _____
- Any infections: Yes No
- Any changes to general health Yes No
- Any new or worsening MS symptoms? Yes No
If yes, please provide more detail here: _____

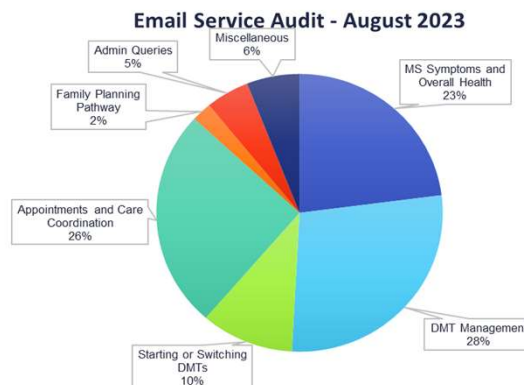
For patients taking Ofatumumab or Ocrelizumab:

In the last 6 months, have you:

- Travelled abroad? Yes No
- Used any recreational drugs? Yes No
- Received any blood products? Yes No
- Had a new or change in sexual partner? Yes No
- Received a new tattoo or piercing? Yes No

Do you have any concerns you would like to discuss with your MS Nurse during your appointment? If yes, please provide more detail here: _____

Figure 3: MS Service Email Queries – August 2023



References:

- Evidence for MS Specialist Services (2015a) Multiple Sclerosis Trust. Available at: <https://mstrust.org.uk/sites/default/files/GEMSS%20final%20report.pdf> (Accessed: 06 October 2023).