

HOW CAN A FAMILY PHYSICIAN LED ORTHOPAEDICS TRIAGE CLINIC HELP THE SECONDARY CARE – A REVIEW OF THE OUTCOMES OF A PILOT ORTHOPAEDICS TRIAGE CLINIC

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INTRODUCTION

- In order to enhance the gatekeeping role of Family Physicians, a pilot Family Medicine Triage Clinic (FMTC) was set up in a General Outpatient Clinic under Hospital Authority in Kowloon East Cluster in 2017 to manage stable patients with predefined orthopaedics conditions referred to Orthopaedics Specialist Outpatient Clinic (SOPC).
- Comprehensive assessment and pharmacological treatment by Family Medicine (FM) specialists according to evidence-based clinical guidelines, and early non-pharmacological intervention by physiotherapists and occupational therapists are provided.

OBJECTIVES

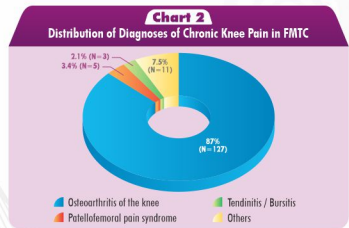
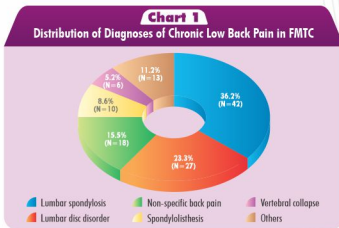
- To evaluate the diagnoses and outcomes of patients with chronic low back pain, chronic knee pain and trigger finger referred to FMTC

METHODOLOGY

- The first 300 new cases attended FMTC from 1st October 2018 were included and the consultation notes from 1st October 2018 to 30st September 2019 were reviewed.

RESULTS

- The mean age of the patients was 62.0 years old and 66.0% were female
- The mean waiting time of the clinic was 10 weeks compared with the median waiting time of 118 weeks of Orthopaedics Specialist Out-patient Clinic (SOPC)
- 100 patients (33.3%), 129 patients (43.0%) and 53 patients (17.7%) were referred for chronic low back pain, chronic knee pain and trigger finger correspondingly. 18 patients (6.0%) were referred for more than one of the pre-defined conditions
- For the 116 patients referred for chronic low back pain, the most prevalent diagnosis was lumbar spondylosis (36.2%), followed by lumbar disc disorder (23.3%) (Chart 1)
- For the 146 patients referred for knee pain, the most prevalent diagnosis was osteoarthritis of the knee (87.0%) (Chart 2)
- For the 56 patients referred for trigger fingers, steroid injections were performed in 28 patients.
- For all the patients who had attended the clinic for more than once, most patients (65.6%) reported symptoms improvement
- Most patients (75.7%) were discharged from the clinic within the review period; only 19.3% patients required referrals to the Orthopaedics SOPC.
- The indications for referrals were mainly advanced knee osteoarthritis (32.8%) and prolapsed intervertebral disc with significant neurology (17.2%).
- Red flags were tagged in 9 patients (3.0%) with the diagnosis of serious conditions including cauda equina syndrome, bone tumour, avascular necrosis of the hip, etc., which warrant urgent assessment by secondary care.



CONCLUSION

Family physician led Triage Clinic could manage patients with high prevalent orthopaedics conditions successfully, make accurate diagnosis and timely referrals for those with serious diseases and reduce the workload in secondary care.