

# FAMILY PHYSICIANS LED TRIAGE CLINIC – A SUCCESSFUL GATEKEEPER TO REDUCE ORTHOPAEDICS REFERRAL FOR PATIENTS WITH TRIGGER FINGER

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## INTRODUCTION

- With an aim to enhance the gatekeeping role of Family Physicians, a pilot Family Medicine Triage Clinic (FMTC) was established in KEC in August 2017 to manage stable patients with predefined orthopaedics conditions which would otherwise require referral to Orthopaedics Specialist Outpatient Clinic (SOPC).
- Comprehensive assessment and pharmacological treatment by FM specialists according to evidence-based clinical guidelines, early non-pharmacological interventions by physiotherapists and occupational therapists are provided.

## METHOD

- Relevant clinical information of all patients with trigger fingers referred to FMTC from 1 August 2018 to 28 February 2019 were reviewed in Clinical Management System.

## RESULTS

### Demographics of patients

- 179 patients were referred to FMTC for trigger fingers.
- Mean age was 62.2 years old.
- 67.6% were female.
- Mean waiting time was 72 days.

### Treatment provided by Triage Clinic

- 110 patients (61.5%) received local steroid injection.
  - One of them was complicated with infection which was subsided with antibiotics.
  - No patients had other serious complications.
- 86 patients (48.0%) received splint from occupational therapist.

### Diagnosis

- 174 patients were diagnosed of trigger fingers (97.2%).
- Other diagnoses included hand osteoarthritis (1.7%), suspected chronic osteomyelitis (0.6%) and non-specific hand pain (0.6%).

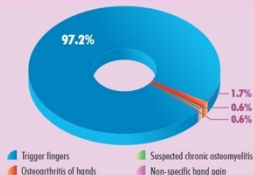
### Outcome

- 85.5% patients had symptoms improvement on subsequent follow-up.
- 48.0% patients had already been discharged.
- The median of consultation attendances was 3 visits.
- The median of follow-up duration was 113 days.

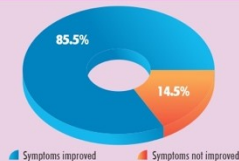
### Patients who were referred to Orthopaedics SOPC

- Only 10 patients (5.5%) required referrals to the Orthopaedics SOPC
  - Eight patients required surgery for trigger fingers
  - One patient was referred as a finger lump was noted after local steroid injection, which was later subsided on subsequent SOPC visits.
  - One patient was referred due to suspected chronic osteomyelitis. Computer tomography was done by SOPC and suggested of osteoid osteoma.

Diagnosis of patients referred to Triage Clinic



Outcome of patients managed by Triage Clinic



## CONCLUSION

- Family physicians led Triage Clinic can provide appropriate and effective management to patients with trigger fingers.
- Patients with severe conditions and unusual clinical features can also be detected and referred timely to SOPC.
- The clinic helped reduce the workload in secondary care by performing a gatekeeper role successfully.