Agreement in urgency between community optometrists and hospital clinicians

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Introduction and Methods

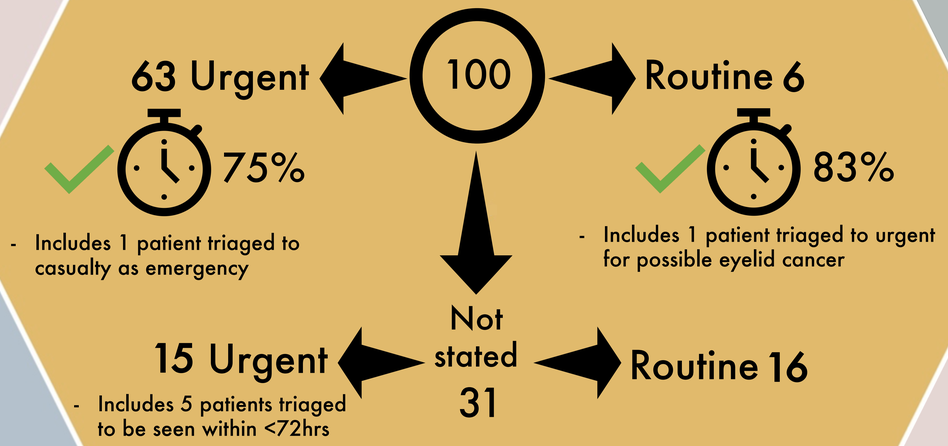
Appropriate urgency of referrals from community optometrists to hospital services is critical to preserve resources and ensure timely patient care.



100 consecutive referrals from community optometrists were matched for urgency with the triaging consultant. All subspecialties were included aside from Cataract referrals.

Results

Of 100 referrals, 63 were referred as urgent and 6 as routine with the remainder having no urgency stated.



Urgency matched with the consultant decision in 75% of all referrals. Largest proportion of referrals (36%) were to the Macula service.

NHS
South Tyneside and Sunderland
NHS partnership

Sunderland Eye Infirmary

Discussion

- Nearly a third of referrals having no urgency stated – including referrals requiring review within 72hrs

- Reasonable concordance is shown between referral urgency and triaging with 75% matching - although less than stated in Shah et al (2021)[1]

- Points of concern in an emergency being referred as urgent and a possible malignancy referred as routine

- A number of referrals (13) for Wet AMD despite separate fast track referral process already in place

- Limited sample size does not allow exploration of weak areas of referrals within each subspecialty

1. Shah, R., Edgar, D.F., Khatoon, A. *et al.* Referrals from community optometrists to the hospital eye service in Scotland and England. *Eye* (2021).

Next Step

- Ensure urgency is stated on all referrals

- Highlight the importance of using the College of Optometrists Clinical Management Guidelines to guide referral urgency

- Referrals should be made to Vitreoretinal or Medical Retina and not to 'Macula' to improve streaming

- Training led by either hospital clinicians or senior optometrists – feedback to the referring optometrists is crucial[2]

- Increase sample size of project to allow definition of missing areas of knowledge within each subspecialty

- Raise awareness of Wet AMD Fast Track Referral process to ensure correct pathways are used

- Compare results to another centre where an urgency referral refinement system is used

2. Harvey K, Edar D, Agarwal R et al. Referrals from community optometrists in England and their replies: A mixed methods study. Ophthalmic and Physiological Optics (2022).