Utilising Non-Medical Staff: Oculoplastic Covid Recovery, Training and Sustainability

NHS Bolton NHS Foundation Trust

Introduction

Delays in treatment due to the Covid 19 pandemic have placed extreme pressure on the NHS to meet 18 week referral to treatment deadlines. This is compounded by findings that referral rates are exceeding treatment rates (Maguire 2021). Additionally the pandemic has had a negative impact on training, significantly reducing surgical exposure (Hussain et al 2020). A One Stop Clinic was implemented to address waiting times and provide additional surgical training opportunities.

Purpose

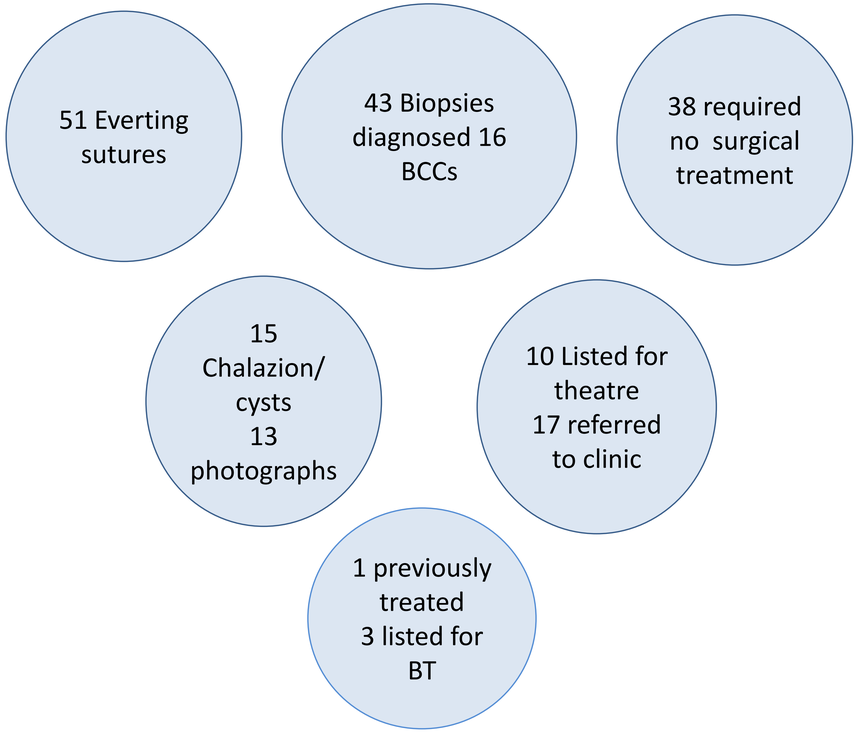
To provide a surgical clinic to reduce waiting times for periocular lesions and entropion, offer additional training for junior doctors and decrease the number of clinic visits for patients.

Method

Patients on the waiting list for periocular biopsy and everting sutures were redirected to the clinic with all new referrals for these conditions directly booked. The clinic was set up as a training session with five 30 minute slots per clinic. New patients are now assessed and offered surgical intervention where appropriate. As the clinic is led by an advanced oculoplastic nurse practitioner patients presenting with differing conditions, such as ectropion, meibomian gland dysfunction and trichiasis are treated or listed for surgery as appropriate.

Results

Over a 12 month period (November 2020-November 2021) 191 patients were reviewed. The template is 5 patients per clinic, with a mean of 4.3. The waiting time during this period reduced from 14 weeks to 9 weeks, with 85.3% reviewed and treated within 18 weeks





Conclusion

The one stop clinic has provided effective care for patients with minor oculoplastic conditions. Waiting times have been reduced, clinic appointments and theatre time have been saved. Feed back from patients has been positive, indicating that they would recommend the service. As patients are directly booked into the clinic the need for a pre op PCR swab and 3 day isolation has been eliminated.

Additionally the clinic provided training for junior doctors to enhance their oculoplastic assessment and surgical skills.

What does the Doctor say?

" I found the One Stop Clinic invaluable during Covid. Not only could I maintain my instrument handling skills and improve minor ops techniques but I also got to review the referral, conduct a consultation and plan the best procedure with the team and patient. Seeing through a large part of the patient journey and visualising the preliminary results was rewarding and associated with high patient satisfaction too. It was a clinic I genuinely enjoyed and drew on so many important skills (which also made my portfolio a bit more 'in the green' too!)" Dr. Marianne Kennedy ST5

References

Hussain,R,.Singh, B.,. Shah, N,. Jain,S. (2020) Impact of COVID-19 on ophthalmic specialist training in the United Kingdom- the trainees perspective. Eye 34, 2157-2166

Maguire, D (2021) Waiting times for elective (non-urgent) treatment: referral to treatment (RTT). The King's Fund http://www.kingsfund.org.uk/projects/nhs-in-a-nutshell/waiting-times-non-urgent-treatment

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