

# Integrated MSK Service GP Newsletter March 2019



Wirral University  
Teaching Hospital  
NHS Foundation Trust

## Helpline

**GP** – [WUTH.MSK@nhs.net](mailto:WUTH.MSK@nhs.net) (we will respond within 48 hours)  
– 0151 604 7341

**Patient** – 0151 604 7501 OPTION 2 (this option goes directly to the MSK booking team)

## Website

**GP** [Click here](#)  
**Patient** [Click here](#)

## Referrals

Triage service	Expected per mth	Jul-18	Aug-18	Sep-18	Oct-18	Nov-18	Dec-18	Jan-19
Upper Limb	868	849	748	828	809	804	581	769
Lower Limb	1,361	1,380	1,208	1,217	1,263	1,096	808	1,135
Spinal	998	956	905	956	899	884	641	954
Rheumatology	182	175	163	160	179	139	129	110
Podiatry	827	685	664	672	755	589	482	681
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4,236</b>	<b>4,045</b>	<b>3,688</b>	<b>3,833</b>	<b>3,905</b>	<b>3,512</b>	<b>2,159</b>	<b>3,649</b>

## Current Waiting Times

The wait to be seen is dependent on

- patient's choice of provider (for consultant pathways)
- patient's choice of clinician
- patient's choice of location
- the seniority of the therapist referred to
- clinical need for senior clinicians

Specialty		Shortest Routine wait	Average wait	Longest Routine wait	Comments
MCAS assessment		2 weeks	6 weeks	15 weeks	Urgent MRIs are ordered in advance of appointment (see updates below). We have redesigned some MCAS clinics to enable patients to be seen quicker. <b>Due to the current backlog, we expect to see improvements in waiting times from June.</b>
Orthopaedics	Foot & Ankle	18 weeks	21 weeks	24 weeks	Consultant vacancy
	Hip	3 weeks	14 weeks	24 weeks	Spec Reg vacancy
	Knee	3 weeks	12 weeks	24 weeks	
	Upper Limb	3 weeks	8 weeks	24 weeks	
Rheumatology		21 weeks	24 weeks	28 weeks	Consultant absent
Pain		3 weeks	30 weeks	31 weeks	Clinician absent
Physiotherapy		6 weeks	10 weeks	20 weeks	<b>Due to the triage process, patients are being diverted away from secondary care into physio. To cope with this additional demand, we are investing in 5 more physios (2 senior) in order to increase capacity to reduce the waiting time. The new staff commence in post in June after which we expect to see a reduction in waiting times. In the meantime we are seeking locum cover.</b>
Podiatry			3 weeks		

We have seen an increase in consultant waiting times over the last month due to vacancies and unexpected absence of clinicians. Patients can choose different clinicians and locations for earlier appointments, where clinically appropriate.

## Booking process

We are not managing to contact patients as early as we want to, and have several initiatives in place to improve.

- From the end of March, all patients will receive a message when they are triaged to acknowledge their referral. Unfortunately, the triage outcome cannot be included in the message for data protection reasons.
- We have invested in more booking staff so that patients can be contacted as soon as possible following triage. This has reduced the backlog for booking so that patients should be contacted within 2 weeks of referral. We have a policy of attempting to contact every patient by telephone to book an appointment or place on a waiting list. Each patient is

called up to three times, and if we fail to contact them, then we book an appointment or add to a waiting list for the service closest to the patient's home.

- We are continually looking for alternative ways to use the e-Referral System to speed up the process.
- Our current telephone system is old and often patients who contact the Booking Office are placed on hold automatically, without ever connecting to the team. We will be replacing the system, but in the meantime, we have an alternative phone number for patients to contact if they fail to get through to the booking team first time (number at beginning of this newsletter). Unfortunately we are unable to automatically redirect patient calls to this line.

## Updates

This section addresses some of the issues that have come up over the last month.

### **Patient Leaflet**

We have updated the patient leaflet to include the new contact number. The MSK website has the most up to date leaflet to download [here](#).

### **Urgent MRIs**

GPs are still able to order urgent MRIs for patients (eg for patients with a past medical history of cancer).

However, the MSK Service now has agreement from Radiologists to order urgent scans if necessary. From 31<sup>st</sup> December 2018, the Triage Service can discuss cases with a Radiologist and if accepted, the patient will be contacted by telephone to complete an MRI Safety Check. This means that the MRI will be performed before the first appointment, and an MCAS appointment can possibly be avoided if the result clearly indicates onward referral.

Here is a reminder of GP's access to MRI scans.

### **24hr urgent**

#### ***Patient should be referred to A&E for:***

- Cauda Equina – if red flag symptoms present for less than 48 hours
- Suspected Metastatic Spinal Cord Compression

### **Urgent MRI (within 1 week)**

#### ***GP should confirm with a Radiologist by telephone, and state consultant name on referral***

- Suspected cervical myelopathy
- PMH of cancer with new onset back pain and no altered neurology – should have full spine MRI (if have altered neurology should be referred to A&E)
- Signs of possible cauda equina but symptoms have been ongoing for more than 48 hours

### **Clinical information in MSK referral form**

We have received comments from GPs in relation to the functionality of the MSK Referral form (eg auto-fill of demographic information and medical history, expansion of boxes when typing).

The form is built in EMIS format and when loaded into EMIS correctly, the form will self-populate with the patient details and the past 12 months of bloods, radiology and recent/significant past medical history. All boxes should expand automatically when typing.

If you believe that your form is not uploaded correctly, please discuss with your Practice Manager.

## **Duplicate referrals**

We receive approximately 20-30 referrals a week that are either duplicate (exactly the same attachments) or for the same patient and condition but from a different GP in the same practice. We regularly review the referral list for duplicates, but sometimes these are not caught in time and the patient can be given multiple appointments. Please could you also look out for this so that we can reduce confusion for patients and avoid wasting any appointments. If you wish to raise the priority of the referral to urgent, please do not send in another referral. Either modify the UBRN or email [WUTH.MSK@nhs.net](mailto:WUTH.MSK@nhs.net) and we will do this on your behalf if clinically indicated.

## **GP Visits**

We have started a program of visits to GP practices. Our GPwSI, Dr Alasdair Wright will visit your practice with a member of the MSK team, to offer referral support and discuss issues. We are starting these visits in March, therefore we will be in touch with your Practice Managers to arrange.

We would also like to invite GPs to sit in on our MCAS clinics. If you would be interested in this, please contact us by email at [WUTH.MSK@nhs.net](mailto:WUTH.MSK@nhs.net).

## **Meet the Team**

Every month, we will focus on a different part of the integrated service. This month we will focus on the Rheumatology team.

### **Rheumatology**



*Rheumatology Clinical Nurse Specialists Nicky Arthur, Anthony Lake and Sarah Peers*

The Rheumatology nursing team consists of 5 specialist nurses and 1 Research nurse.

The team has a broad role which includes;

[WUTH.MSK@nhs.net](mailto:WUTH.MSK@nhs.net)

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- independent nurse led clinics
- SOS clinics
- Management of the rheumatology helpline
- Triage of referrals
- Injection training clinics
- New patient education clinics
- Management of rheumatology day cases for a variety of treatments including biologic therapies and osteoporosis infusions.

Our research nurse runs a variety of clinical trials for rheumatology treatments.

#### Our Top Tips

- When referring to Rheumatology please complete all of the relevant rheumatology sections and give us as much information as possible as to why you want us to see the patient. This helps to avoid a rejected referral requesting more information.
- If a patient has been seen by the Rheumatology service before, please contact us before making a referral, as we may be able to organise a follow up appointment rather than assessing the patient again.

## WUTH MSK website

The MSK website can be found at <https://www.wuth.nhs.uk/making-a-referral/wirral-integrated-musculoskeletal-service/>

The site will be continually developed but currently includes;

- All published newsletters
- Information about the new service
- Downloadable referral forms
- Downloadable patient leaflet
- Useful links to patient self-management advice and websites