

Department of Rheumatology

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New fibromyalgia management guidance and pathway for NWAFT

There has been a significant increase in the number of new referrals to rheumatology, where fibromyalgia is suspected or already confirmed. A recent review at NWAFT identified up to 25 % of new referrals to rheumatology are for fibromyalgia. In the majority of cases, based on clinical features, examination and test results for other conditions are already excluded. These patients attend rheumatology clinic after a long wait of around 12-13 weeks to just confirm the diagnosis. The majority of the primary care clinicians feel confident in diagnosing fibromyalgia, however, at times require specialist input in ruling out other underlying conditions.

There is limited evidence to support the use of simple analgesia as well as tramadol, most effective interventions are education, CBT (if required) and exercise particularly aerobic and strength training. None of these interventions require access to secondary care and can be arranged in primary care. This will also reduce unnecessary long waits that may have detrimental effect on the prognosis, as early treatment can improve long term outcome. We are now providing a document to aid diagnosis and management of fibromyalgia within primary care, with some input from the physiotherapy team if available. We will continue to see cases where the primary care clinician is uncertain or suspecting of other underlying rheumatological conditions (based on clinical features or test results).

As a result, patients with fibromyalgia will be able to get early diagnosis and advice on management. This will also allow us to offer appointments for patients with other rheumatological conditions where diagnosis and management can only be offered in a specialist setting in a more timely manner. We have already formulated a new early arthritis pro-forma and are also in the process of starting a fast track service for patients with suspected giant cell arteritis.

Thank you, in anticipation, of your support with this new pathway management.

Kind regards

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