

ACC - MRI referral from general practice

Background

In 2017 ACC, Mercy Radiology, and ProCare (PHO) co-designed new pathways that give patients direct access to MRI referral for certain knee, shoulder and back (cervical and lumbar spine) injuries via their GP, instead of requiring referral to a specialist before an MRI can be ordered.

GPs have only been able to refer for a low-tech imaging X-ray or ultrasound but with this new pathway, GPs who attend training and become accredited can make *direct referrals for high tech images* (MRI scans) by following referral guidelines for knee, shoulder and back (cervical and lumbar spine) injuries covered by ACC.

Currently, patients referred via traditional pathways requiring a specialist appointment for access to an MRI can wait up to 30 days for an appointment (Auckland average). By empowering GPs to request HTI and manage the results, *patients can initiate treatment as much as two months* faster than the current situation.

Key messages

- The objective is to **streamline the patient journey by reducing waiting times from injury to definite diagnosis**, enabling a quicker start to appropriate treatment, faster recovery and improved outcomes.
- Clinical guidelines and audit and governance frameworks have been developed in a **collaborative effort** between orthopaedic surgeons, GPs, and radiologists.
- There has been **an upskill in primary care for management of musculoskeletal conditions** involving active rehabilitation as an alternative to surgery.
- The new referral pathways have been designed together with GPs, specialists, and radiologists.
- The pathways are focused on user needs – primary care oriented clinical pathways for decision support with technology-enabled referrals and booking.
- The pathways are focused on GP needs – supported navigator role, consult support, and practical education.

GPs are well placed to make the clinical decision on whether an HTI is required. They can then determine treatment plans more efficiently, whether that be active rehabilitation or referral to a specialist. This allows GPs to triage patients and *ensure referrals to orthopaedic specialists are more informed and appropriate* so that specialist time is focused on patients who are most in need. It *strengthens relationships* between primary care and specialists, integrating health providers to deliver the best outcome for patients.

Education

Safety and quality is paramount in all new models of care and changes to referral practice. Musculoskeletal injury assessment training and referral decision guidelines, focused on the most effective assessments for a busy general practice, are provided for participating GPs over two in-person sessions at night, supported by online training.

Referral decision guidelines have been developed with clinical input from GPs, radiologists, and specialists leveraging existing guidance across New Zealand and Australia. The programme is overseen by a steering group representing partner organisations with ongoing input from a clinical reference group. Referral patterns and outcomes are continuously monitored.

OLD vs NEW pathway

GENERAL PRACTICE REFERRAL TO MRI

2017 Sector Co-design Pilot



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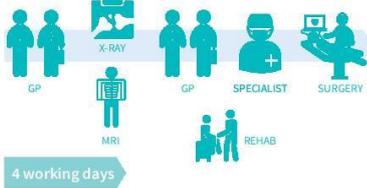


A STREAMLINED PATIENT JOURNEY

PREVIOUS PATHWAY:



NEW PATHWAY:



4 DAYS TO MRI

↑ 50% IMPROVEMENT IN ACCESS TO MRI FOR 15-30 YEAR OLD MĀORI & PACIFIC

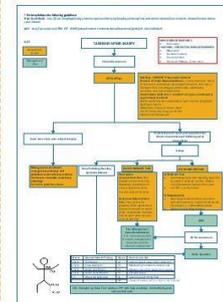
MĀORI AND PACIFIC PEOPLE HAVE **INCREASED ACCESS TO MRI ABOVE**

HANDS ON GP EDUCATION



EASY ACCESS MUSCULO-SKELETAL ONLINE TRAINING

CLINICAL PATHWAYS

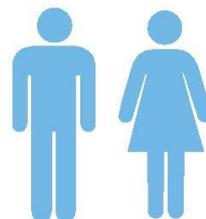


Decision support providing more appropriate and better quality referrals

GP E-REFERRAL - ↑ EFFICIENCY

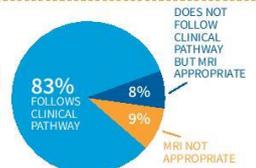


RADIOLOGY-LED PATIENT APPOINTMENT BOOKING



PATIENT EXPERIENCES A MORE **STREAMLINED** JOURNEY TO REHABILITATION

91% OF GP REFERRALS ARE FOR APPROPRIATE MRI



Research supports quality GP MRI referral

The paper titled 'Guidelines, training and quality assurance: influence on general practitioner MRI referral quality' is has been published in the Journal of Primary Health Care.

To read this study visit : <http://www.publish.csiro.au/HC/pdf/HC19034>

In the media - references

- NZ Doctor - IMAGEine that: National rollout next for GP imaging. April 2019. <https://www.nzdoctor.co.nz/article/news/imageine-national-rollout-next-gp-imaging>
- NZ Doctor – MRI referral project shows patients benefit when you teach docs new tricks. April 2018. <https://www.nzdoctor.co.nz/article/print-archive/mri-referral-project-shows-patients-benefit-when-you-teach-docs-new-tricks>