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Background

Northwick Park Hospital is a 500 bed, district general hospital situated between the Northwest London boroughs of Brent & Harrow serving a population of up to 600 000.

The Hospital has an average of 250 A&E and 200 urgent care centre attendances each day, with up to 60 medical admissions per day into a 46 bedded medical assessment unit. Consequently A&E and the MAU are at full capacity. As part of 'shaping a healthier future'- an NHS programme to improve care in Northwest London, A&E departments in the neighbouring vicinity of this hospital are due to close by September 2014.

This Trust with the local clinical commissioning group piloted and launched an Ambulatory care unit (EACU) with the broad aims of:

1. Providing rapid access to acute / specialist medical services and treatments in a day case setting.
2. Improve the quality of care for ambulant, acute medical patients
3. Avoiding admission, facilitating in-patient discharge and improving overall bed capacity

Tools Used

- AEC directory
- Experienced based design
- Amb score
- Sustainability tool
- Visits to other functional AEC units

Results

An operational EACU was piloted from January 2013 & launched in July 2013:

- Location: vacant ward on 2nd floor of main hospital block
- Opening hours: Monday-Friday 0900-1930 and weekends 0900- 1700
- Staffing: 2 medical doctors (CT level), 1 registrar, emergency nurse practitioners
- 6 trolleys and 6 infusion chairs.
- Access to rapid diagnostics (pathology, X-rays, US, CT and MRI)

Referrals received by an advanced nurse practitioner and suitability screened using the AMB score.

10 pathways were developed with flexibility for non-pathway conditions. November 2013- Ultrasound with sonographer in ambulatory care providing instant, same day access for patients.

February 2014- Daily consultant cover & review for EACU patients

Throughput has sequentially increased since launch (figure 1). Up to 30% of the acute medical take has diverted through EACU (figure 2). 72% of patients are on specific pathways (figure 3)

There have been a total of 8000 EACU attendances since launch (56% new) Admission rate is approximately 20%

There have been no major clinical incidents (28 minor incidents with no harm)

EACU services scored highly on patient satisfaction (> 95% in all domains).

Challenges

- Appropriate space and workforce
- Funding- resolved with CCG negotiations
- Safe referral pathway
- Advertising & communicating scope of EACU service
- Recording activity & tariff
- Measuring impact, patient flow patterns (confounded by closure of services in neighbouring hospitals) and cost savings

Figure 1- Patient throughput

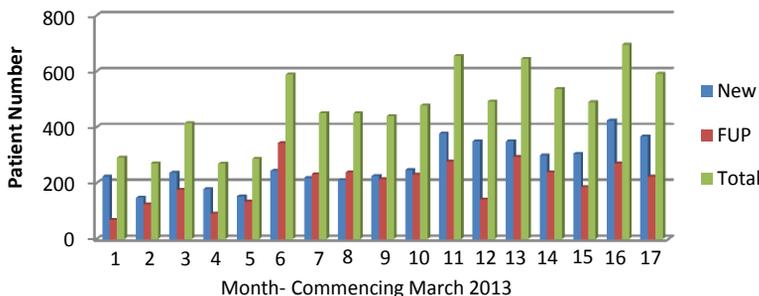
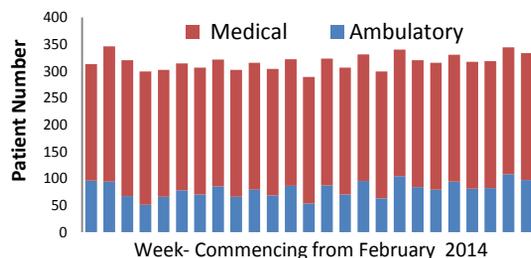


Figure 2- Proportion ambulatory: medical admissions (range from 19-35%)



Next steps

- Development of further novel pathways
- Incorporation of cardiology pathways with in-house ECHO and holter monitor service
- Evolution of process driven pathways with increased specialty presence
- Change culture in hospital- all medical doctors will rotate through EACU
- Extend operational hours to coincide with GP surgeries

Figure 3- Disease case mix across 3 month period

