



equip
Education Experience Excellence

Self Referral Maternity Services

Neil Anderson, Aghalee Surgery

Trainer- Dr Sean McDermott



Northern Ireland Medical and Dental Training Agency

Background

- Awareness of self referral to various services is low, amongst patients and staff in many practices.
- Trusts have well established self referral to maternity services pathways.
- Increasing patient and staff awareness of the option to self refer.
- Allowing patients the choice in how they wish to be referred, whether that is through seeing the doctor or through self referral.
- Increased convenience for patients who would rather self refer than attend the GP.

Aim

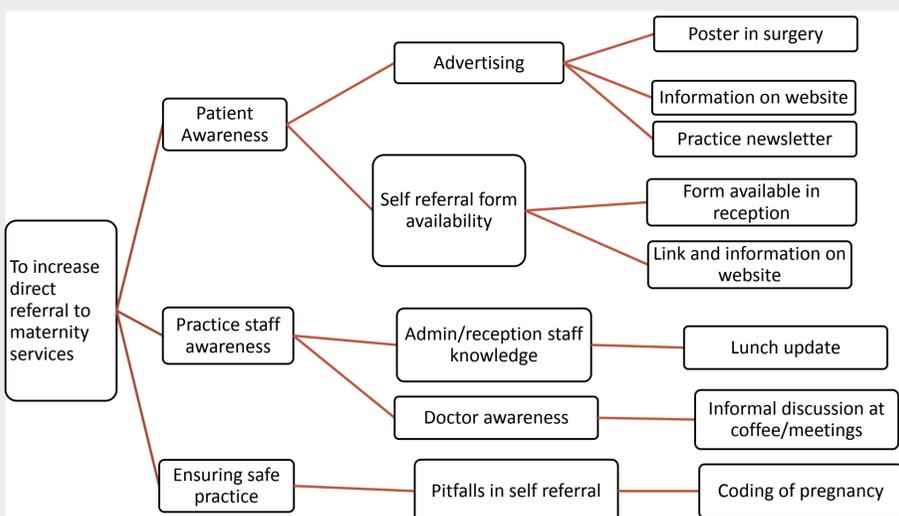
To improve awareness amongst the practice population of the option of self referral to maternity services.

Aiming to reduce face to face appointments with GP's in routine ante-natal referrals by 75%.

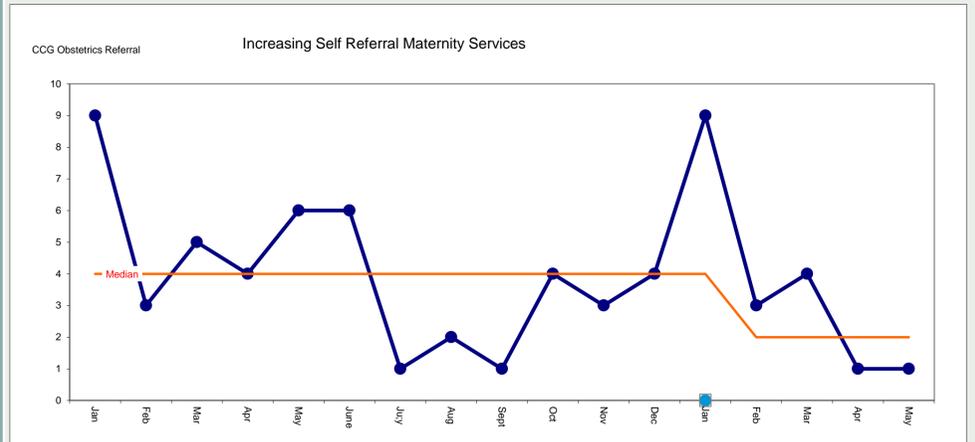
Try to ensure continued safe practice even if using self referral.

Improvement Methodology

- Attempted to measure current numbers of self referral to maternity services, however Healthy system is not very amenable to coding pregnancy as patients will remain coded as pregnant forever. This makes reviewing these numbers very difficult.
- Considering the difficulties regarding coding it was felt that this was unlikely to be improved given the system difficulties. Surrogate outcome of reduction in CCG referrals for ante-natal care employed instead.
- Improvement focused on staff and patient increased awareness of the option to self referral to maternity if this was the patients preferred choice.



Results



- Recent results positive, with reduced numbers of GP referral via CCG in April and May well below the median number of 4. This meets my aim to have a reduction of 75%, but it will remain to be seen how the numbers trend over the coming months.

Outcome Measures; Patients able to avoid coming to see GP for face to face appointment and a more streamlined service. Reduced appointments with GP and therefore increased appointments available.

Balancing measures; Concern over complex patients not coming to see GP when they discover pregnancy. Self referral forms reviewed and are comprehensive in terms of explaining when women should still discuss with their GP.

Outcome

- The first change that I implemented was placing posters in the waiting area, at the reception desk and in the foyer of the GP surgery in December. Unfortunately the referrals via CCG spiked around this time despite the increase in posters. A patient attended my clinic and told me she had seen the poster whilst waiting but given she had already made the appointment I did the referral myself. This highlighted the need to improve knowledge before getting to the surgery as often the first time patients are in the surgery is whilst they are waiting for the doctor to see them.
- My second change was at the end of January to tell the admin staff in a more formal meeting about the self referral forms. This meant that they were able to tell patients about the service whilst booking their appointment, if the patient mentioned they were coming to get referred for maternity care.
- This meant that we have now had our first confirmed knowledge of patients self referring through practice staff telling us if a patient has chosen to self refer.
- My most recent change, at the beginning of April, was to make an updated online document detailing the ways in which patients can help to manage their own health. This included links to self referral for maternity, but also self referral to other services such as physio and podiatry. I also took that opportunity to put helpful information regarding ways to try improve physical and mental health.
- Feedback from practice staff is that most patients when offered the chance to self refer have chosen that option and have given positive feedback thus far.

Next Steps

- Restart practice newsletter to help increase awareness of self referral to maternity
- Using this newsletter to also take the opportunity to tell people about other ways to improve self care through various means, including other forms of self referral available
- Consider system wide change to coding procedures, although currently at practice level not thought to be a current cause for concern
- Discussion with patients who have self referred to understand their patient experience and if they would recommend self referral