



"The Specialist Physiotherapists are a real asset. Their expertise in MSK assessment and treatment is complementary to the skills of the Emergency Department Doctors and Nurses and contribute to the success of the Department in many ways. In particular, patients benefit by being seen in a timely fashion by experts who can provide appropriate treatment and follow up, reducing the demands on other specialists."

Dr Richard Parris, Consultant
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Musculoskeletal Specialist Practitioner in Emergency Care

Accident and Emergency, Bolton NHS Foundation Trust

The A&E department at Royal Bolton Hospital is the second-busiest in Greater Manchester - 115,920 patients attended the department in 2012-13. The Trust has seen a 4.8% increase in attendances during that year - an additional 5,187 patients compared to the preceding year.

Aiming to improve musculoskeletal services

The department conducted a pilot to explore the impact of adding a Specialist Physiotherapist to the A&E team and to assist the department of achieving the four hour targets.

With this pilot, the service aimed to improve:

- patient access to specialist musculoskeletal assessment and management
- the efficiency of the service provided to these patients, reducing unplanned returns
- the awareness, amongst A&E staff as a whole, of the management of musculoskeletal conditions
- the performance of the A&E as a whole, in meeting service targets

Knowledge and skills developed

The Specialist Physiotherapist developed their skills and knowledge in:

- Advanced examination and clinical reasoning
- Knowledge of management of acute trauma
- Referral for and interpreting x-rays
- Non-medical prescribing
- Developing pathways for onward referral to speciality

The extended scope of practice for these practitioners included management of minor head injuries, rib injuries, basic wound care and application of plaster casts.

The practitioners undertook a number of education and skills courses in the above areas, and completed a Master's module in Extending Proficiencies in Healthcare. Skills and competencies were developed and assessed in-house.

	Specialist Physio-therapists' patients	All minor injuries patients
Total time in A&E (average)	164 minutes	198 minutes
Rate of unplanned returns (within 7 days)	2.30%	4.70%
Time to treatment (average)	53 minutes	61 minutes

Figures from audit undertaken in April/June 2013

Valuing and growing the role

As part of a range of initiatives introduced by the A&E department, this role has enabled the Trust to meet the national target of 95% of patients being assessed and admitted, discharged or transferred within four hours.

The value of the role is also demonstrated in the following ways:

- The service has increased from one part-time physiotherapist in A&E, to four physiotherapists delivering a 7-day service
- The Specialist Physiotherapists now also provide two review clinics per week in A&E, which help to reduce the workload on the consultant led review clinics, allowing them to focus on the more seriously ill or patients in need of their highly specialist skills.