**Changes in management of referrals to tertiary Neurosurgical services at Salford Care Organisation**

From 1st July 2023, we are making some changes to how we advertise our Neurosurgical services to referrers in primary care. We will be splitting the current “Neurosurgery Service” referral option into two more specific options:

* Spinal Neurosurgery; and
* Cranial Neurosurgery

This will allow the service to make some improvements to how referrals are triaged more quickly and effectively, which in turn will help ensure that patients see the most appropriate clinician first time.

In due course, we also aim to bring together the referral options for Spinal Neurosurgery, and orthopaedic Complex Spinal Surgery; although these remain two distinct services, we will provide a single point of referral to make things clearer for referrers. In the meantime, please only refer patients to either Spinal Neurosurgery or Complex Spinal Surgery (not both) to avoid wasted appointments and confusion for patients.

Secondly, a reminder of a previous communication sent. All Greater Manchester localities are equipped with commissioned MSK services. Many of the referrals that come directly to Neurosurgery and Spinal Surgery services are bypassing local MSK services inappropriately. The waiting time, as of June 2023, for a first appointment in Neurosurgery is 60 weeks, and for Spinal Surgery it is 70 weeks; these waiting times are still increasing.

To support referrers, please find embedded the pathway for management of spinal / radicular pain. This pathway has been recommended by the Best MSK Health Collaborative. When triaging referrals to Spinal Neurosurgery and Complex Spinal Surgery, we will be using this pathway and may return some referrals with advice to refer to local MSK services, where this is appropriate.



NB the pathway excludes patients presenting in primary care with red flags. Red flags include: suspected cauda equina syndrome (follow Suspected Cauda Equina Pathway), unwell/fever/night sweats, immunosuppression e.g. IV-DU, HIV, steroid use, chemotherapy, history of cancer, (to be referred urgently to Triage and Treat practitioner), significant trauma – (refer to Local Emergency Department)

For those spinal cases that referrers do feel need referral to specialist neurosurgical or spinal services at Salford, we would be grateful if the attached referral proforma could be used, to help ensure we receive the information required to triage appropriately and safely.



In support of this, we would be grateful if you can communicate these changes to GP’s and primary care colleagues within your localities; suggested key messages to be communicated can be found in the embedded document below.



Thank you for your cooperation. We believe that these changes will help ensure that patients see the right person at the right time to help them manage their spinal condition.

**Sam Dickens**

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