

Dear GP

CHANGE IN NEUROLOGY HEADACHE SERVICE FROM 23rd AUGUST 2019

The Neurology department at NUH are implementing a change in the way Neurology secondary services are provided with regard to referrals you make for “headache”. This will affect the pathways of referral to Neurology outpatients, but we believe that this will improve the service by allowing us to provide outpatient appointments more rapidly where they are necessary for patients referred with “headache”.

A significant number of all the requests for outpatient appointments that we receive relate to advice on the diagnosis, investigation and management of headache. Whilst a proportion of these patients indeed do need to be seen, audits and reviews have shown in a significant proportion we believe that a clear and tailored management plan can be delivered remotely by our departmental headache specialists reviewing referral letters and medical notes, and providing written, individualised feedback to primary care

We therefore plan to establish such a remote or “virtual” clinic where we can review more cases than we would be able to see in a face-to-face outpatient setting. This will reduce the considerable and increasing pressure upon the service caused by an overall increase in demand for Neurology outpatient appointments, and help us ensure your patients who do need to be seen can access specialist neurology opinions earlier.

In order to ensure the virtual clinic is as helpful for GPs and patients as possible the greater detail we have about the nature and history of the headaches we have the better, so in discussions with GP colleagues we have redesigned the neurology headache referral form (see attached) to guide you about the key questions to consider

From Friday 23rd August 2019 you will be required complete a new referral template for headache referrals only and book via the Referral Assessment Service. This template can be found on the Ardens referral directory under the heading ‘Neurology’.

This has been agreed with your local commissioner and clinical colleagues and is a pilot for 6 months. Any referrals received not on this template will be rejected and unread.

This change in service and pathway has been agreed with the following CCGs:

Nottingham City
Nottingham North and East
Nottingham West
Rushcliffe
Mansfield and Ashfield
Newark and Sherwood

This does not apply to 2ww referrals and the local headache pathway including direct access MRI still exists (available on Ardens and APC website) to help guide primary care management before considering referral.

The headache DOS is available to out of area referrals only during this pilot period.

If you have questions, concerns or comments then please do contact me through my secretary (Dr Jonathan Evans, Head of Service for Neurology, NUH. 0115 924 9924 ext 61735; jonathan.evans2@nuh.nhs.uk).

Dr Jonathan Evans
Head of Service for Neurology