

Thursday 23 May 2013

Update for Brent Health Partnership Overview and Scrutiny Committee

This report provides an update on changes to colposcopy services at Central Middlesex Hospital.

Summary

On 1 April 2013, the colposcopy service at Central Middlesex Hospital (CMH) relocated to Northwick Park Hospital on a temporary basis.

This decision was made in order to support the one colposcopist remaining at CMH (following the retirement of a nurse colposcopist), after taking governance advice from Brent & Harrow Commissioning Screening Chair (now part of Public Health England) and the London Quality Assurance Authority (now NHS England).

Without this arrangement, the one colposcopist remaining at CMH would have been left working in isolation, which is against the national screening programme's statutory clinical guidelines, which are set to ensure that clinical standards for waiting times and safety are maintained.

Colposcopists are highly specialist health professionals and the Trust has been unable to appoint someone to replace the nurse colposcopist who retired. However, the Trust is training one of its gynaecology specialist nurses to take over.

An extra clinic session has been set up to manage any increase in demand at Northwick Park Hospital and to ensure there is no impact on waiting times for patients.

We are conducting satisfaction surveys to seek the views of patients about the service and the temporary changes in place.

Background

Women are referred for a colposcopy if their smear test results (normally carried out at a local GP surgery) show some abnormalities which need further investigation.

A colposcopy is a procedure that closely examines the surface of the cervix using a magnifying instrument called a colposcope. A specialist, called a colposcopist, performs the procedure to check the cells on the surface of the cervix for abnormalities.

The Trust runs a direct referral service, in accordance with national screening directives, and supports the Government's Cancer Reform Strategy on the 62-day standard for waiting times.

This is intended to minimise the time it takes to make an appointment by enabling immediate referrals for women identified as being at risk of cancer, so that they can be seen for further review promptly. This reduces the risk of urgent results that are sent to GPs being lost and also alleviates some of the administration. The Trust went live with direct referral in June 2010.

Essentially, this meant that women in Brent and Harrow were directly referred to either Central Middlesex or Northwick Park Hospital by the Trust's laboratory service when abnormalities were detected as part of the analysis of the smear test. In the past, the results of the smear test would have gone back to the GP, who would then have made a referral to the colposcopy service.

Women would then have been allocated an appointment at Northwick Park or Central Middlesex, depending on the first available appointment at either hospital. Women were able to change times, dates or locations with Colposcopy Team co-ordinators. Currently the team is asked to make amendments to about 10% of appointments and, in the majority of these cases, these involve changing appointment times rather than hospital.

The quality standard for appointment times is within four weeks for high-grade abnormalities and within eight weeks for low-grade abnormalities.

Historically, there has been a high rate of 'did not attends' at Central Middlesex and, in 2012, the London Quality Assurance Authority sent more than once notification that the rate was one of the highest in London. The rate has remained consistently high, despite many and varied attempts to reduce it. The failure of patients to attend may have a negative effect on their treatment and, at the same time, wastes valuable appointment time; it can even extend waiting times.

There have been no complaints from women about which hospital they were allocated to for further investigations.

COLPOSCOPY ATTENDANCES AND DNA RATE 2011/2012 & 2012/2013

NPH	2011/12	2012/2013
ATTENDANCES	1368	1410
DNA	222	266
DNA RATE	16%	19%

CMH	2011/12	2012/13
ATTENDANCES	909	885
DNA	224	256
DNA RATE	25%	29%

Stakeholder engagement

The temporary change was discussed and agreed with the following organisations and committees:

- London Quality Assurance Authority Agency
- Brent, Harrow, Hillingdon and Ealing Cervical Advisory Group
- NWLHT Clinical Strategy Steering Group

Next steps

The situation will be reviewed in six months and the Trust would welcome involvement from the Committee and further discussions. The review will involve looking at the feedback received from patients.

Tina Benson
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