



Diagnosing Well in Newcastle

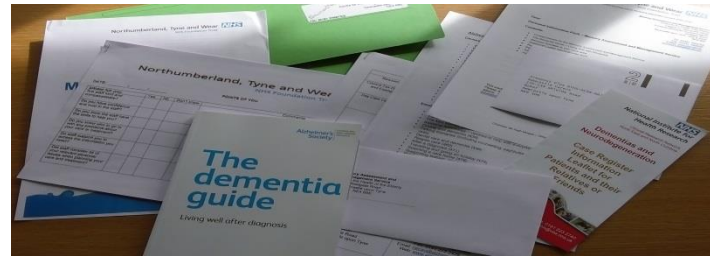
Newcastle Memory Assessment & Management Service (MAMS) offers assessment, diagnosis and treatment for older people who present with memory problems and may have a dementia. They also see people under 65 who may be suspected of having a dementia. As part of a wider trust initiative the service is going through continuous change and development, including moving towards the model adopted by the Sunderland service which is part of the same trust (Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust)

The pathway

Referrals arrive at a single point of access (SPA) before triage to MAMS or the Community Mental Health Team (CMHT) according to need. In MAMS a nurse coordinator decides on who is most appropriate to conduct the initial assessment, a senior nurse, consultant psychiatrist, or consultant psychologist. The admin team sends an appointment letter to arrange a time convenient for the service user. Usually the patient and carer attend together for the initial assessment where the details are entered on the Trust electronic records system (RIO). Cases are discussed at a daily Multidisciplinary Team meeting (MDT) and a plan made including necessary scans and tests. A diagnostic appointment is then set and medication may be started. A coping review is scheduled for three months after the diagnostic appointment. The pathway is flexible to account for people with comorbidities such as depression.

Involving service users and carers

The trust has a "Points of View" form to collect feedback and also uses the Friends and Family Test. The service has also adopted the Triangle of Care best practice guidelines from the Carers Trust. The clinic also has an electronic information screen that carers can use to access relevant information such as Alzheimer's Society leaflets, and even print them to take away. This is additional to the tailored information packs that staff create to reflect the needs of each person. The service works hard to be user centric, for example double checking that patients want to know their diagnosis before delivering it and following up with carers by phone if they cannot attend an appointment. There is a contact number so that patients and carers can always ask questions.



An example of the tailored information pack given to users of MAMS

Capacity and demand

There is a monthly operational meeting to manage capacity and demand. There are usually 60-80 referrals a month, but it can be more. The service is flexible in using additional staff or overtime and provides home visits where appropriate, but despite this there can be considerable fluctuation in DNA rates. To manage this, the service has secured additional administrative support to phone patients before appointments to remind them. They also keep a register of people willing to take short notice appointments to fill gaps that arise from patient cancellations.

Referral and scanning

Referrals are usually made by a GP. The service does not accept self-referrals although this option may be offered in future. The clinic has engaged GPs with an offer to help them diagnose in care homes and is closely linked with the NTW Challenging Behaviour Service who raise awareness of MAMS where appropriate. All patients are offered a CT scan, but if the patient declines, the pathway can still proceed. A previous recent scan will be used if available. Waits for scans can fluctuate but are generally around three weeks. The trust is negotiating to guarantee timescales so that they can shorten the pathway further.

Communication and education

Diagnosis letters to GPs include ICD-10 codes with any additional details clarified in the text. For staff, NTW has mandatory training and development. In addition MAMS has an education session on Friday afternoons where they protect staff time and invite speakers to present on all kinds of relevant topics. For patients and carers once a month there are open door education/information sessions on dementia, the different types, the brain and keeping well. They are facilitated by the psychologist and Senior Clinic Nurse. There is a WRAP (Wellness, Recovery, Action Plan) group especially to help carers look after themselves and a carers support group at the adjoining day hospital. A 15 week Cognitive Stimulation Therapy (CST) course is available and there is a memory group where both patients and carers can look at strategies for coping with memory loss.

Innovation

The service is co-located with the Challenging Behaviour Team for better collaboration and has good links with the Community Mental Health Teams. The service also does a lot of signposting to other services such as carers centres. The service employs a nurse prescriber to make the prescription of anti-dementia and anti-depressant drugs more efficient. Nurses often also have a champion role to maintain a focus on particular themes, such as carers or physical health. The service is rated as excellent by MSNAP.