Medical Retina Monitoring – Hydroxychloroquine

LOCSU

Description of Intervention

Recent studies have shown that retinal toxicity for patients on high dosages or long durations of use of Hydroxychloroquine (HCQ) are higher than previously thought.[1] In 2020 the Royal College of Ophthalmologists recommended annual monitoring for retinal toxicity for patients on long term therapy of HCQ or Chloroquine.[2] LOCSU responded by publishing a pathway to support the recommendations.[3] In some areas, local teams turned to LOCs inviting their support in meeting the College recommendation; adopting the principles of optometry first the service delivered in primary care seeks to help meet demand by using capacity and capability in primary care helping to ease HES capacity pressures and improve patient care.

In Kent, the service uses a single point of access. This allows all providers, optical practices and ophthalmology services delivered in GP hubs, to transfer information in the same way. There are 18 sites across the county providing good coverage enabling patient choice and care closer to home. Practices involved in Kent have completed local accreditation allowing them to grade images. Patients on HCQ have been identified by the hospital trust and were then contacted by the HCQ screening service. The model allows patients to be allocated to a practice ahead of a future screening date allowing the practice to manage resources.

In South East London, an innovative service has just started – practices have been capturing images, shared via an IT platform and graded by local ophthalmologists. The grading will be done by optometrists once local training is complete. The local training to grade by optometrists involves completing their Prof Cert in Medical Retina, which is also of benefit in other Enhanced Services.

The shared IT platform is planned to be used for other ocular imaging sharing / grading in the future.

In Essex, the service went live in March 2023. The LOC has worked closely with the trust to implement the local HCQ service. The trust have identified 900 patients from their waiting lists. This list was sent to the LOC lead, who then contacted the patient and confirmed eligibility. Patients are then allocated to a practice of their choice and screening arranged at a convenient time. In October 2023, of the 900 patients identified, 200 have been transferred to practice with 55 patients already having received an appointment. Images captured are graded by the optometrist in practice with onward management by HES ophthalmologists as required.

Intended Objectives

- Care closer to home
- Increased capacity within the system
- Reduction in secondary care waiting lists
- Improved patient outcomes
- Increased delivery of services within primary care – Optometry First Approach
- Better use of Primary Care Workforce
- Supports NHS Net Zero by 2040 ambition with care delivered across multiple sites reducing need for patient travel
- Improved use of digital technology to allow remote ophthalmology assessment

Implementation Challenges

- Cost of Equipment for Optical Practice
- Time consuming to contact patients directly to ensure still require screening
- Need for accurate up to date patient information on waiting lists – Kent 121 patients have been discharged (due to stopping medication / declining the service)
- Implementation roll out slowed due to IT integration issues

Learnings

- IT challenges for transfer of full OCT
- Kent and Medway, allocation of patients for future screening allows optical practices to manage capacity and plan
- Collaboration and engagement with LOCs is paramount to achieving service success

Outcomes

Essex Five practices will be onboarded by the end of November 2023. 900 patients identified with 200 transferred out into the service. Of these 200, 55 patients have been seen in primary care to date.

Kent Since September 2022, 1,902 Patients have been contacted with 970 allocated to their chosen provider. 811 patients are awaiting allocation.

Contacts
SEL / Kent and Medway LOC – Charles Greenwood.
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1 The risk of toxic retinopathy in patients on long-term hydroxychloroquine therapy – PubMed (nih.gov)
2 Hydroxychloroquine-and-Chloroquine-Retinopathy-Monitoring-Executive-Summary.pdf (rcophth.ac.uk)
3 locsu.co.uk/what-we-do/pathways/retina

Kent & Medway LOC – Representing Our Local Optical Profession
Lambeth Southwark & Lewisham Local Optical Committee
BBG Bexley, Bromley and Greenwich LOC
ESSEXLOC LOCAL OPTICAL COMMITTEE