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Orthopedics in the digital age

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Introduction & Aim: The tradition model of care of the Orthopedic Fracture Clinic (OFC) is labor intensive, expensive, has poor satisfaction rates from patients and staff and often has minimal impact on management and outcomes of patients with minor injuries. Our aim was to implement a Virtual Fracture Clinic (VFC) in our hospital for the management of minor injuries that is safe, cost effective and improves satisfaction.

Method: All patients presenting to the Emergency Department (ED) with a minor bony injury was referred to the VFC instead of OFC. VFC patient radiographs were reviewed by an orthopedic registrar (patients did not need to attend the hospital for this appointment) and the referral was subsequently sent to allied health (occupational therapy or physiotherapy), discharged to the GP or sent to the traditional Orthopedic Fracture Clinic (OFC) if review of that patient was required.

Results: Over a period of three-month, 634 patients were referred to the VFC instead of OFC. 550 patients (those discharged to GP or allied health) did not need to return to the hospital for unnecessary OFC appointments, which not only reduced the strain on OFC workload, but also was cost effective and improved patient and staff satisfaction levels.

Conclusion: Whilst still in the preliminary stages, we anticipate this service will continue to improve and reduce the workload of both the OFC and the ED for the management of minor injuries. We are optimistic that VFC models will be the way of the future for Australian orthopedic departments.

Biography

Bonnie McRae has interest in orthopedics, trauma and sports medicine. She is passionate about the improvement of healthcare through the implementation of virtual clinic models, patient self-care pathways for minor injuries and the use of audits to observe peaks in trauma presentations to hospitals in order to enable adequate resource allocation. She is also involved in the education of junior medical staffs and holds Academic title at Griffith University, University of Queensland and is an Orthopedic Group Tutor for the University of Edinburgh.

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