

Supporting the rheumatology multidisciplinary team to write directly to patients

Charlotte A. Sharp^{1,2}, Karen Staniland¹, Jill Firth³, William J. Gregory^{4,5}, Brian McMillan⁶, Elizabeth M. MacPhie⁷, William Dixon^{1,8}

¹Immunology and Rheumatology, Manchester Royal Infirmary, Manchester, UNITED KINGDOM, ²The Kellgren Centre for Rheumatology, Manchester Royal Infirmary, Manchester, UNITED KINGDOM, ³Pennine MSK Partnership, Integrated Care Centre, Oldham, UNITED KINGDOM, ⁴The Faculty of Health and Education, Manchester Metropolitan University, Manchester, UNITED KINGDOM, ⁵Centre for Primary Care and Health Services Research, University of Manchester, Manchester, UNITED KINGDOM, ⁶NHS Foundation Trust, Salford, UNITED KINGDOM.

Background:

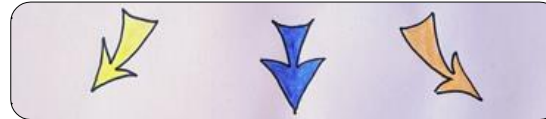
- Historically, healthcare professionals (HCPs) have written to each other about the people for whom they care in the third person.
- In 2018, the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges issued guidance advising HCPs to write clinic letters directly to patients, copied to primary care¹.
- Despite this guidance, there is low and variable uptake in the rheumatology community across the UK nations, with scant evidence regarding rates and factors that affect uptake.

Methods:

- The project working group includes a patient research partner, a GP, and rheumatology consultant doctors, nurse and physiotherapist.
- A four-person patient and public involvement and engagement group will contribute throughout.
- Six site leads from the four UK nations will assist with recruitment.
- Ethical and governance approvals will be sought from NHS Research Ethics Committee and the Health Research Authority.



The problem: Writing outpatient clinic letters to primary care, copying the patient in, is not patient-centred and uses language that patients may not understand²



Our aim: To understand current perspectives and practice, and to co-produce resources with the rheumatology multidisciplinary team to support them to write directly to patients



Study design:

The project has three objectives: scoping, exploring and co-producing resources.

Scoping: aims to establish patients' current understanding of rheumatology terminology and existing HCP practice.

- Patients from across the UK (n=150) will be surveyed.
- Multiple choice and free-text questions will consider patient perspectives and understanding of rheumatology terminology.
- A multi-regional online survey of HCPs (n=100) will establish whether HCPs currently write directly to patients; barriers and enablers; and the support needed to change practice.

Exploring: aims to understand perspectives on writing directly to patients in greater depth.

- Qualitative data generated from interviews and focus groups with patients (n=20) and HCPs, (n=20) will be analysed thematically.

Co-producing: aims to co-produce resources to support HCPs to write directly to patients.

- Patients and HCPs will work together to co-produce these resources to support the rheumatology multidisciplinary team to write directly to patients.

References:

- Academy of Medical Royal Colleges. Please, write to me: Writing outpatient clinic letters to patients. 2018.
- Rayner H, Hickey M, Logan I, Mathers N, Rees P, Shah R. Writing outpatient letters to patients. *BMJ*. 2020;368.