Telephone Consultations in Rheumatology

Pilot study

**Background** – patients with rheumatoid arthritis (and other chronic inflammatory arthropathies) usually require long term follow up, and at least annual review. Some patients have stable disease, may be in full time employment, or may travel long distances to attend clinic. Sometimes, the patient may prefer a telephone consultation rather than attending in person.

**Setting** – Wed pm (2nd line) clinic in GGH

**Proposal** – that selected patients attending for review are given the option of taking part in a pilot study.

* When patients make their follow up appointment, they are also given an information sheet about the pilot project
* Patients are given the opportunity to attend the clinic in person as usual **or**
* To phone the clinic receptionist to register ‘arrival’ – the usual checks can take place to ensure that the patient’s details (address, phone number, GP etc) are correct
* Patients are asked to confirm which number they would like to be contacted on, and can be informed about the likelihood and duration of any delay before they will be phoned back
* The patient’s case sheet/sticky labels are then placed in the queue to be seen by the medical or nursing staff, with the contact patient phone number attached to the front
* In turn, patients will either be seen in person, or phoned at home/work

**Requirements** – all patients will have a follow up appointment booked as usual, with access to the case sheet and Portal as required.

**Limitations** – there will be no opportunity to examine the patient or undertake investigations, resulting (in some cases) in a reduction in diagnostic capability. If an examination, phlebotomy or imaging is required an additional appointment will be needed (either at GGH or at the patient’s GP).

* In particular, patients should be encouraged to attend in person if their arthritis is active, and NOT to phone in because they feel too sore/ill to attend in person

**Audit** – selected patients who utilise the telephone clinic could be audited on:

* Patient satisfaction
* % of consultations that require a follow up visit in person for phlebotomy, imaging or face to face consultation.