



# Patient Acceptance of a Novel Offsite Monitoring Clinic

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## Aim

The Virtual Monitoring Clinic (VMC) in the Department of Rheumatology and Immunology at Singapore General Hospital (SGH) is a new pilot service led by an Advanced Practice Nurse (APN) to provide care for patients with stable rheumatoid arthritis (RA) or spondyloarthritis (SpA). In the VMC, blood tests are performed off site at Singhealth Polyclinics or in SGH, and medications are couriered to patients or self-collected at SGH after blood test results are reviewed by the APN. In this study, we aimed to understand patient acceptance of this new service.

## Methodology

Eligible patients were invited to participate in the VMC by a research coordinator during their routine outpatient visits (between November 2012 and January 2013). Their reasons for participation or nonparticipation and their demographic details were solicited using a standardised pretested survey form. Descriptive analysis was performed using SPSS 17.0.

## Results

**Table 1: Demographic Characteristic of Respondents**

	Frequency (%)
Age in years (Mean (SD) )	57.17(12.81)
Gender	
Female	120(87%)
Male	18(13%)
Ethnicity	
Chinese	107(78%)
Malay	17(12%)
Indian	11(8%)
Other	3(2%)

**Table 2: Reasons for Interest/ Lack of Interest in VMC**

Reason for interest in the VMC	Frequency (%)
Save a trip to the hospital	72 (90%)
Convenience of having blood tests done in a polyclinic	31(10%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>
Reason for lack of interest in the VMC	
Preference for face to face consultation with a doctor	30(58%)
Preference for blood tests, consultation and medication collection to be on the same day	15(42%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>52</b>

Among the 138 patients (mean(SD) age 57.17(12.807) years, 87% females, 78% Chinese, 12% Malays, 8% Indians) surveyed, 58% (80/138) were interested in the VMC because it saved them a trip to SGH (cited by 72), or because undergoing blood tests in a polyclinic was convenient (cited by 31). An additional 4% (6/138) indicated interest but were unable to participate as they did not live near any SingHealth Polyclinic. The remaining 38% (52/138) of patients felt the VMC did not suit their requirements because they preferred face-to-face consultation with a doctor (cited by 30) and/ or to have blood tests, consultation, and medication collection on the same day (cited by 15 patients). Participants and nonparticipants did not differ in their demographic profiles.

## Conclusion

This study shows that VMC has received relatively positive reception from eligible patients. Individual preference and inaccessibility of convenient blood test facilities in the community are two major barriers to wider acceptance of this service. The VMC can potentially attract more patients after these issues are addressed.