

Background

Physiotherapy is an important component of musculoskeletal (MSK) care. Research has shown that early access to physiotherapy improves outcomes for patients, leading to better quality of life and reduces cost (Zigenfus GC et al 2000).

There are increasing demands for physiotherapy service due to ageing population. However, patients who require such service at the polyclinics will need to go through a long wait before they can receive treatment.

Old Pathway



Hence, SingHealth Polyclinics (SHP) sees the need to site Physiotherapy service in primary care.

Methodology

- A team was set up to see through the planning and execution of the project within 6 months.
- Clinical workgroups, Group Allied Health and SGH Allied Health were consulted on the referral criteria, guidelines and scope of services.
- 5 common MSK diagnoses were identified as suitable for physiotherapists to manage in the polyclinics.
- These conditions are Arthralgia & Myalgia, Backache, Arthropathy, Spinal disorder, Sprain & Strains.
- Physio Centres were set up in Tampines and Geylang Polyclinics.
- Doctors were given referral guidelines for physiotherapy in the polyclinics.

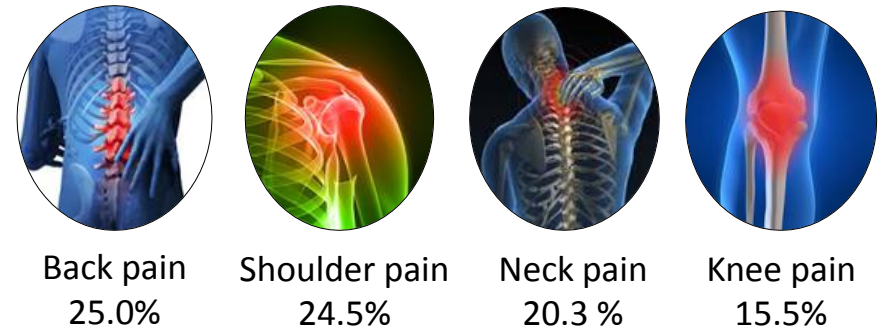
Results

- Shorter waiting time for patients to get physiotherapy treatment.

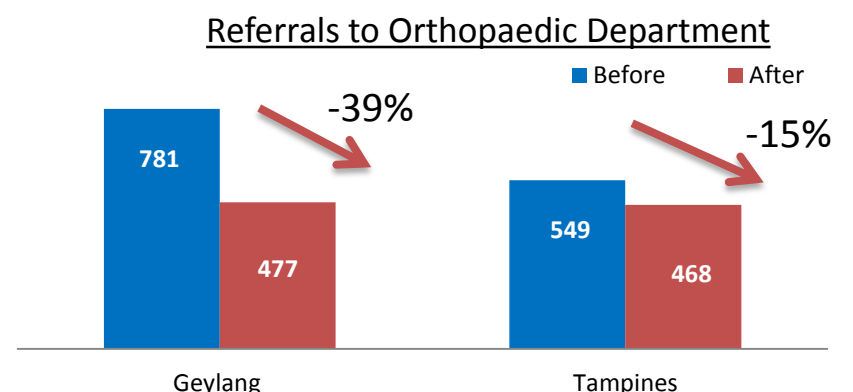
New pathway



- Top 4 conditions managed at SHP Physio Centres:



- Average pain score reduced from 5.5 to 1.3
- Reduction in Referrals to Orthopaedic Department



- Overall 98% of the patients were satisfied with the services rendered



Conclusion

- Physiotherapy is an important and essential component for initial treatment of MSK conditions.
- Provision of early access to physiotherapy helps to relieve patients' symptoms, restoring function, and avert the need to refer to hospitals.
- The provision of physiotherapy in the ambulatory settings helps to reduce congestions at the hospitals.
- Continuing Medical Education on these common MSK conditions (Back, Shoulder, Neck and Knee) will further assist healthcare professionals to manage them more effectively.