

Neurology Services in Northern Ireland

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Northern Ireland Demography

- 1.7 million people
- 5 HSC Trusts
 - Most regional services provided via Belfast HSC Trust, but also has a DGH function
 - DGH neurologists appointed from 2003 onwards
 - HPSS commissioned Neurology Reviews – 1999 and 2002 and ?2012
 - Still long waiting times (26 weeks not unusual for routine, 9 weeks for urgent – trust-trust variability++)
 - Non-recurrent independent sector provision to maintain access targets
 - Recurrent funding difficult to secure
 - Growth in numbers of neurologists offset by reduction in ability of general medicine to absorb non-complex secondary care neurology
- NB - Most neurological care is delivered in primary care by GPs

Current Manpower

- Regional Neuroscience Centre – Belfast HSC Trust
 - 16 beds
 - 10.5 WTE consultants (7 have outreach clinics)
 - 8 Registrars
 - 3 Epilepsy Nurses, 4 MS Nurses, 2 PD Nurses, 1 MND Care centre Co-ordinator
- 4 DGH based services
 - Craigavon – 2 Consultants, 1 Registrar, 1 visiting consultant, 1 Epilepsy, 1 PD and 2 MS Nurse Specialists
 - Ulster Hospital – 2 Consultants (developing GPwSI headache)
 - Altnagelvin – 2 Consultants, 2 visiting consultants, 1 Epilepsy and 1 MS Nurse Specialist
 - Antrim Area Hospital – 1 consultant, 2 visiting consultants

Innovations

- Email triage services
 - Dr Victor Patterson, Western HSC Trust
- Virtual Clinic
 - Dr Raeburn Forbes / Dr Orla Gray
 - Southern HSC Trust
 - 20% triaged to investigation
 - 90% of these do not need to attend
 - 10% of these will still attend
 - Development of *smart* triage systems to support decision making eg eCeptionist software

Regional Specialist Clinics

- Epilepsy
- Movement Disorders
- Multiple Sclerosis / Neuro-inflammatory
- Neuro-disability/rehabilitation
- Cognitive
- Neuro-muscular
- ??Headache
 - One neurologist with interest based in DGH (me)
 - Occipital Nerve Block, IV DHE, Botox etc provided
 - Still no specialist nurse for headache
 - GP Education and Support is Vital
 - Accepts tertiary referrals from other neurologists

The Future

- Regional review awaited ?2012
 - 3 additional consultants mooted (by who?)
- Neurological Alliance Gaining Momentum
 - Crucial if political pressure required
- Re-configuration towards network model
 - Remove out-reach general clinics
 - Out-reach sub-specialty clinics
 - Additional DGH based general neurologists
- Virtual Clinic/ Supported Triage may become essential
- Joint ABN/RCP Statement of June 2011
- Reduce dependence on independent sector ad hoc provision