Feedback from the Travelling fellowship 9th – 13th October 2023

Rochdale Team visiting the Royal Berkshire Team

Dr Dhivya Das Rheumatologist, Chad Critchley Advanced Practitioner in Rheumatology and Katie Stables Specialist Physiotherapist

We would firstly like to thank Dr Antoni Chan for inviting our team down to Reading, and secondly to BRITSpA for awarding us with their Travelling Fellowship to support this terrific opportunity.

Dr Chan had put together an action-packed programme for the week full of learning opportunities both patient-facing and in the form of education sessions lead by the whole team. The format worked well, and it was tailored to all our disciplines. The team made us feel very welcome and it was great to spend time individually with them and as a whole team.

The set up of the clinics at RBH allowed access to face-to-face consultant support for physio, nurses, PAs and medical staff. This is something we are glad to say we are now looking at within our service again. Dr Chan’s team unlike us have Physician associates, and it was good to spend time in clinic with them to learn about their valuable role.

We had time to observe the work of Kathryn their Physiotherapist who like our physiotherapists sees clinic follow-ups in the AS Service. We introduced this some years back and we too have seen the benefit from their skill sets, but also in reducing nurse and consultant follow-ups.

Dr Chan described the work he has been part of with Reading University, designing AI for use in triage for Axial Spondyloarthritis (AxSpA), and this has inspired us further with our hopes to be more involved in research locally. Healthcare is changing fast, and he highlighted the importance of clinicians being an important part of this journey. Katie has now offered support to work being done as part of the Jigsaw study by the University of Manchester to develop an algorithm aiming to predict undiagnosed axial spondyloarthritis.

Chad has been leading some work with our team around setting up nurse-run metabolic bone disease clinics and fracture liaison services, which the RBH team has set up already which has bolstered our drive to push our vision forward.

As some of our challenges are similar, it has been invaluable to learn how Dr Chan’s team worked through these, for example, coding, integrated IT systems, PIFU and virtual assessments. We are taking these back to the wider team to show perseverance pays off.

This Fellowship has inspired our team to go back and look deeper at what our barriers really are, how we can break them down and how we can change the way we work to ensure we are delivering the best care for our patients. Dr Chan and his team have filled us with the confidence we needed to know we can do this, but also the realism that changes take time and not to stop trying.

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