

## **Service for patients with Ankylosing Spondylitis**

Ankylosing Spondylitis is a chronic inflammatory disease which mainly affects the spine and larger peripheral joints. It invariably starts with inflammatory back pain in young adults with consequent impact on physical function and has socio-economic costs.

Services, for this group of patients, begin, following diagnosis by the Rheumatology Consultant. They are then referred to the Physiotherapy Led Ankylosing Spondylitis Clinics.

The Aims of this service are:

- Improve quality of care
- Ensure regular assessment, monitoring and measurement of disease activity
- Improve access to medical help
- Ensure expert physiotherapy service
- Direct access to patient population
- Provide more cost-effective service
- Improve expertise
- To provide signposting and information on patient support groups employment and psychological issues

A patient pathway has been designed to ensure appropriate individualised management and advice from members of the Rheumatology Multi-Disciplinary Team who work in partnership with General Practitioner Services.

### **Physiotherapy**

- Physiotherapy is considered to be one of the most important interventions
- Preventing functional impairment and relief of symptoms

New Patients are offered a variety of interventions which are tailored dependant on individual need and patient preference. This can range from advice on self management and education to individual treatment programmes, pain management, supervised exercise and or hydrotherapy

We also offer a more intense exercise and education course at a local Health Club. The aim is to provide education to new patients and those

with little or lost exercise ability and to encourage confidence in self management and in the use of community facilities.

This programme has had positive outcomes for those patients who have attended.

Pictures and Patient comments with permission from the first course (2010)



*"I have had AS for 40 years; I always learn something new from these courses"*



*"There was a spirit of comradeship and good humour and the discipline helped us to see that exercise could be fun".*

## Combined Clinics

We also run a combined Consultant, Nurse, Physiotherapy Clinic for the more vulnerable patients requiring more careful monitoring associated with medical and physical management strategies.

## Education

As well as providing education packages for patients we provide formal education and practical experience for junior staff.

Our Physiotherapy practitioner has designed an education package for referrers on the recognition of inflammatory back pain. Improving knowledge, the increased awareness should provide these patients with early diagnosis which is important for effective disease management.

**Please see the [National Ankylosing Spondylitis Society \(NASS\) website](#) for more information about ankylosing spondylitis.**