

**P062 HOW DO OUR PATIENTS FEEL ABOUT FACE-TO-FACE REVIEW IN RHEUMATOLOGY CLINICS SINCE COVID-19? A SINGLE TERTIARY CARE CENTRE EXPERIENCE**

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**Background/Aims**

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the management of outpatients. During the first wave of the pandemic, and in common with other departments, almost all our patient consultations happened over the phone. As the rate of infection fell, we felt it was crucial that the patient voice was heard as we re-organised clinical areas and re-opened services. In view of this, we conducted an online survey to better understand patient concerns around visiting our hospital for appointments and how we can adapt the way we work to ensure patient safety and satisfaction.

**Methods**

Using our electronic patient record, we identified patients from the clinic lists of 2 adult rheumatology consultants over a 6-week period between June and August 2020. This timeframe was selected as it was towards the end of the UK nationwide shielding period and our department was returning to deliver an increasing proportion of outpatient care face-to-face. Included patients had to have been treated with an immunosuppressive drug and only those on monotherapy hydroxychloroquine, sulfasalazine or prednisolone under 5mg were excluded. We consented each patient via telephone before sending them an email link to an online anonymised survey. This included a combination of 9 multiple choice and white space questions.

**Results**

65 patients were identified of which 16 were excluded as we were unable to contact them or they declined consent. 49 patients were sent the survey of which 31 responses were received. 21/31 (67%) of patients had been shielding. The survey revealed six themes of concern. These include: lack of social distancing in common hospital areas, lack of personal protective equipment compliance amongst staff, prolonged time spent in waiting rooms, lack of knowledge on new hospital policies, logistics of using public transport to come to the hospital, and the importance of retaining virtual consultations going forward. 55% of patients stated they would feel safe in returning to the hospital for face-to-face appointments over the next few months.

**Conclusion**

Important themes have emerged from this project that we have presented to our rheumatology multi-disciplinary team, Director of Innovation and Head of Patient Experience. This has reinforced adaptations in our hospital environment such as installing safe distance seating in waiting rooms and scheduled phlebotomy slots. Further, where possible we call patients before face-to-face appointments to inform them of our safety measures and try to schedule these patients for outside peak travel hours. We acknowledge that using an online survey may limit responses from older individuals or those with English as a second language. Despite this, our project has shown the importance of recognising the unique concerns of rheumatology patients and the value in using their opinions to create a "new normal" for our outpatient environment.

**Disclosure**

**R. Amarnani:** None. **B. Goulden:** None. **J. Manson:** None. **V. Morris:** None.