



Project Summary

Building on experience during the COVID-19 pandemic to maximise virtual consultations in Rheumatology care

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During the COVID-19 pandemic many hospital departments – including Rheumatology – have changed their practice to incorporate greater use of digital technology in order to provide continuing patient care. Following this period of rapid adoption, research is needed to identify and enhance best practice, and to explore how we can evaluate efficacy and unintended consequences to inform local and national policy making around the incorporation of virtual consultations into secondary care.

The aim of this study is to (a) explore the acceptability and user experience of virtual consultations among patients and practitioners in Rheumatology, RUH, where this has been widely implemented since the onset of COVID-19; (b) explore user perceptions of the positive and negative impacts of moving to virtual consultations to inform what measures should be included in subsequent trials (e.g., referral patterns, GP education, reliability of assessment), (c) integrate these findings with existing research evidence to generate recommendations for implementation and further research; and (d) devise and test a suite of solutions to the challenges of virtual consultations with patients at the RUH.

The project is a key strategic objective of UoB (which is providing matched funding) and the RUH, helping to increase knowledge transfer for the benefit of patients.