

Digital Tools Case Study

Quick intro to yourself and any contact details you're happy to share ...

Jennifer Howard - Respiratory Strategic Lead Southeastern Trust (SET).

Jennifer.howard@setrust.hscni.net

John Mitchell has just been appointed as Interim Pulmonary Rehabilitation Service Lead within the SET and will be taking this work forward. John.mitchell@setrust.hscni.net

What physio services do you provide? (e.g. specialty, conditions, location, patient demographics)

Pulmonary Rehabilitation is offered by all Trusts to adults with chronic respiratory disease such as COPD, Bronchiectasis and ILD. In SET three teams provide these programmes across Down, Lisburn and North Down and Ards areas.

We are now looking to design and implement a specific pulmonary rehabilitation programme for those patients post covid infection who continue to experience respiratory symptoms such as breathlessness – Long Covid.

What tools are you using to deliver your physio services digitally?

We have been running Live Pulmonary Rehabilitation classes on the ZOOM communication platform since June 2020. These zoom classes can be complemented by educational videos which have been produced by Trusts across NI. The videos have been collated into a digital library which can be accessed and used by rehab therapists in any Trust.

Also working with the Northern Ireland Chest, Heart and Stroke (NICHHS) charity we have produced a series of exercise videos which the patients can use to maintain their physical activity. NICHHS push these out to the client list every Monday morning and they have been very well received.

How have these services replaced face to face contact?

In the current environment all face to face pulmonary rehabilitation classes have been stepped down and all classes offered are through zoom.

As we rebuild services we will aim to offer PR through a number of delivery models – F2F, Zoom, individual home exercise programme. We aim to give the patient more choice and hope to increase patient engagement and completion rates as a result.

What is the clinician's experience of using the digital tools?

Collectively we were all digital novices prior to April 2020 but since then we have used online communication platforms regularly for various reasons (virtual clinics/treatments/meetings etc.). It is not without its challenges but we continue to explore solutions and recognize that it is the way forward to engage as many of our patients as possible.

Do you have any patient feedback on digital physio service offer?

We have an anonymous patient survey offered to all patients as well as word of mouth. Our feedback has been very positive, the "Class atmosphere" has not been lost and people find it very helpful to have other patients working as hard, which serves as motivation to keep going!

Part of email received from patient using exercise videos.

Before COVID, our Pulmonary Rehab groups in Castlewellan, had exercises weekly, each of us, doing what we could.

Charmaine's brilliant exercise videos have replaced those, and the advantage of them is, we can watch them over and over, and exercise with her!

Exercises make me feel happier, even laughing, and make me feel less alone!

They waken up my muscles and stretch my bones!

They help my breathing!

And I think they help my sleep.

Any top tips to others exploring using digital tools in physio services?

Practice makes perfect. Whether it's using the online communication platform to chat with family, take part in quizzes, take part in Pilates classes, whatever.

Just like life, go on, make mistakes and learn from them!