Objective

• In 2007 the British Society of Surgery of the Hand (BSSH) established minimum standards for units treating hand trauma in the UK.
• Audit of the hand trauma service at the Royal Devon and Exeter Hospital in 2016 demonstrated a failure to comply with these standards.
• We sought to introduce new measures to improve the service delivered to our hand trauma patients.

Methods

A series of new measures were introduced following 2016 audit. These included:
• Removal of the Emergency Department’s direct access to the Hand Trauma Clinic bookings and replacement with a consultant led virtual triage clinic every morning.
• Hand Trauma Clinic relocated adjacent to hand therapy clinic.
• All patients requiring hand therapy to be seen on the same day as their Hand Trauma Clinic appointment.
• New patient review directly with hand therapists was made available via triage.
• Dedicated hand trauma day case operating lists were established on three days per week.
• Junior Doctors covering plastic surgery on-calls were taught the BSSH hand trauma standards at induction.

The same audit was repeated for the same period in 2017, one year following implementation of these changes.

Results

Following implementation of changes, the 2017 re-audit found the following was achieved:

• >50% improvement in the number of patients seen in the hand trauma clinic within 5 days of their referral (Figure 1)
• 35% improvement in the number of patients waiting less than 5 days for their surgery (Figure 2)
• This resulted in an increased hand trauma generated income of approximately £29,000 per month or £344,000 per year
• Overall complaints due to repeat hospital visits and cancelled operations were down by 80%

Conclusions

• Integration of the Hand Surgeon into the initial triage of referrals, using a virtual triage clinic, is strongly advised
• Overall complaints due to repeat hospital visits and cancelled operations were down by 80%
• Hand trauma can generate income for Trusts
• Aggregation of marginal gains can lead to significant improvements
• Reinvestment in hand trauma service required to match the increasing workload

Reference