

Remote consultations in Palliative Care during the Covid-19 pandemic – Near Me, near you?

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Abbreviated abstract:

The Covid-19 pandemic has necessitated a reduction in face to face patient/professional contact and led to the promotion of remote consultations, in particular video consultations. In NHS Scotland, Near Me is used as a platform to enable video consultations.¹ There is limited evidence on the use of video consultations in Palliative Care² and NHS Tayside Palliative Care services had no experience of video consultations prior to March 2020. The project seeks to understand the use of Near Me within NHS Tayside Palliative Care services in the early months of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Related publications:

1. J. Wherton et al, Evaluation of the Attend Anywhere/Near Me video consulting service in Scotland, 2019-20: Summary Report. Scottish Government 2020.
2. A.E. Sutherland et al, *BMJ Supportive & Palliative Care*, 10(3), 2020.



Tayside Palliative and
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Previous work, challenge, and approach

The Covid-19 pandemic has necessitated a reduction in face to face contact between patients and healthcare professionals.

NHS Scotland encourages the use of a software platform called Near Me (developed by Attend Anywhere) and evaluation has shown that it can be acceptable to both patient and professionals.¹

Remote (video) consultation has been encouraged as an alternative to face to face contact.

There is limited evidence on the use of remote consultation within Palliative Care.² Due to Covid-19 there will be an ongoing role for remote consultations and there is a need to ensure patient safety, equity of access and training for healthcare professionals.

This project seeks to understand the use of video consultation within the Palliative Care service in NHS Tayside during the early months of the Covid-19 pandemic, to explore how video consultation is currently being utilized and to identify areas for future work to enable us to improve the experience for patients, families and staff.

Techniques and Methods

A service evaluation on use of Near Me in the Palliative Care service in NHS Tayside.

Data identification

Near Me consultations within the Palliative Care service in NHS Tayside for three months around the peak of the Covid-19 pandemic (April, May, June 2020).

Data collection

Data on Near Me consultations provided by the NHS Tayside Near Me project team. Information included date and time of consultation and which part of the Palliative Care service performed the consultation. Data on number of Palliative Care consultations of all types provided by Business Unit, NHS Tayside.

Data analysis

Number of consultations per month, further stratified by team region (Angus, Dundee, Perth & Kinross) and type – medical outpatient Symptom Control Clinic (SCC), Community MacMillan Nurse (CMN), Other (e.g. Lymphoedema Nurse clinic).

Results and Conclusions

Month	Type	Angus	Dundee	Perth & Kinross	Total consultations
April	SCC	9	3	0	17
	CMN	0	2	1	
	Other	0	1	1	
May	SCC	11	3	2	51
	CMN	0	0	26	
	Other	0	8	1	
June	SCC	10	9	3	68
	CMN	0	3	39	
	Other	0	4	0	

- 136 Near Me consultations – 23% of total consultations.
- Increase in use of Near Me over 3 month period – suggests that remote consultation is acceptable in Palliative Care.
- Clear variation in use of Near Me across the service – further work needed to understand reasons for this e.g. patient factors, staff factors.
- Next steps will be to seek patient and staff feedback and to develop protocols to aid patient selection.