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2 September 2021

Salford patients are first to use ground-breaking app for Long Covid

People in Salford living with long Covid are being supported with the help of a ground-breaking mobile app and clinical website to track their recovery and improve their health.

A team from the Northern Care Alliance NHS Group (NCA), has been working with Salford City Council's Health Improvement Service to support people suffering from persistent symptoms after contracting Covid-19.

The Office of National Statistics estimates that 1.1 million people in the UK currently have long Covid which is the persistent symptoms that last for four weeks or longer after contracting the virus, such as breathlessness, fatigue, brain fog, pain and general decline in health and wellbeing.

Up until now the Salford team has been using the well-known Covid-19 Yorkshire Rehabilitation Scale (C19-YRS) to aid diagnosis and assessment of long Covid symptoms. This was initially being collated manually, with 24 patients being contacted each week since February.

Since then, there has been a call for more efficient systems to manage the growing long Covid caseload and standardise care across the NHS.

Now Salford patients will be able to download an app onto their mobile device and update their progress at varying stages of their recovery, allowing their clinician to make any changes to their care management plan.

Taruna Patel from Salford's Single Point of Access team, said:

"The symptoms of long Covid can be devastating for many people and we can now better understand people's complete range of symptoms.

"Our patients are very keen to use the app as another tool. By inputting the information themselves, they will be able to see how their health is improving over time and use the information to form a discussion with their clinician, as well as to show their family.

"Previously we were making calls and asking people around 30 questions over the phone with the varying responses. It was quite tiring for patients and time consuming, particularly those with severe long Covid symptoms."

Programme manager Sarah Cannon explained: "The app means information can now be sent electronically direct to the Long Covid Clinic Team, so they have information ahead of appointments. We can even decide on the length and type of appointments using the tool to match the needs of the patient.

"The tool will also help with reporting data required for long Covid at a national level."

The team at Salford Care Organisation says the feedback from patients so far has been really positive.

One patient, Sarah Bleasdale, 49, of Salford, who has been using the app for a few weeks, said:

"I found the app easy to download and very user friendly. I'm looking forward to using it more and intrigued as to the next step, hoping it will help me to get the right support and care."

The app, developed by Elaros, in partnership with The University of Leeds NHS Trust, enables patients to self-report symptoms and the impact their symptoms are having on their daily health and wellbeing.

NHS England and NHS Improvement have recommended use of the digital platform within national guidance for post-covid syndrome assessment clinics.

The app uses the latest scientific research and takes the patient through a series of questions to record their health status before contracting Covid, and what it is now. The information is displayed in radar plots and uploaded into the patient record.

Patients are asked to regularly update the app and over time it shows what progress they are making.

June Roberts, Consultant Nurse and Associate Director of Transformation at the Northern Care Alliance NHS Group, said: “There had been very little digital development to support us dealing with long Covid, so we were keen to get involved in this research project. The C19-YRS was a good approach to support our initial assessments of patients and gave us a good holistic view, but it was tiring for patients, so we started looking into the app.

“It’s great to have been involved in developing the app and our patients told us they wanted it too.

“It will really help patients visualise their progress and let them have informed discussions with their clinician. It will also increase GP knowledge around the progress their patients are making as we can send information electronically to them too.

“It will also help the research agenda, as long Covid is so new we don’t know to what extent people will suffer and how long it will take them to recover. We can contribute to national and local research and also improve our local knowledge to make sure we have the right people in the right service to support our patients.”



Salford Royal has been named as one of the ten clinical research sites in the UK, as part of a £3.4million National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) - funded project (The LOCOMOTION Study), led locally by Professor Nawar Bakerly in collaboration with researchers from the University of Leeds. This project which will see Elaros' C-19 YRS platform adopted across all four nations. The project aims to help devise new ways of optimising the delivery of treatments and services for long Covid.

ENDS

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Pictured: Sarah Bleasdale, Salford patient and app user;
Images of the app on mobile home screen.

Notes for Editors

The Northern Care Alliance NHS Group (NCA) brings together staff and services across Salford Royal NHS Foundation Trust and The Pennine Acute Hospitals NHS Trust, providing hospital and community healthcare services in Salford, Oldham, Bury and Rochdale. Our dedicated team of around 20,000 staff delivers high standards of care and experience excellence to over one million people across Greater Manchester.

More information about the NCA can be found at www.northerncarealliance.nhs.uk