

## Patient Initiated Clinics



*Philip Hawkins, rheumatoid arthritis sufferer and PIC patient*

*“The conventional approach to outpatient care used to provide me with an appointment every six months, often when I was perfectly well. Direct Access allows me to see a specialist when my symptoms are bad, providing quick and effective treatment to help me get on with my life.”*

The management and care of long-term conditions usually involves giving patients routine appointments. However, these can often take place when a patient's symptoms are mild, resulting in hospital appointments that aren't needed and a shortage of availability for urgent consultations when a patient's condition deteriorates.

Researchers from PenCLAHRC have been evaluating a new approach to address this problem, known as patient-initiated clinics (PIC). Instead of appointments booked months in advance, the scheme allows patients to contact their specialist department whenever their symptoms get worse. The patients have access to a specialist nurse-led telephone advice line and, if needed, are offered a face-to-face appointment within two weeks.

Working in partnership with the rheumatology team at Plymouth Hospitals NHS Trust, the new system, called Direct Access, has been rolled out to patients with rheumatoid arthritis and is already helping to provide an improved service.

## What Happened Next?

Over 900 patients with rheumatoid arthritis have signed up to PIC, with participants concluding they were happier with their care – finding the scheme more accessible and convenient, as well as requiring fewer GP visits than the traditional approach.

As well as being more accessible and convenient when compared to the routine appointment system, Direct Access was also found to have a significant impact on patient satisfaction, helping patients transform the way they manage their condition.

In collaboration with the South West Academic Health Science Network (AHSN) and Plymouth Hospitals NHS Trust, PenCLAHRC are now looking to expand PIC to other patient groups across a much broader range of long term conditions.

**For further information visit:**

**[www.clahrc-peninsula.nihr.ac.uk](http://www.clahrc-peninsula.nihr.ac.uk)**

### **Acknowledgement:**

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### **References:**

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Accessible via: [europepmc.org/articles/PMC3792120](http://europepmc.org/articles/PMC3792120)

### **Useful Links:**

[clahrc-peninsula.nihr.ac.uk/research/ahsn-penclahrc-project-patient-initiated-clinics-pic-for-people-with-long-term-conditions](http://clahrc-peninsula.nihr.ac.uk/research/ahsn-penclahrc-project-patient-initiated-clinics-pic-for-people-with-long-term-conditions)