

Referral Guidelines – Ankylosing spondylitis and Spondyloarthritis

Primary Care Assessment

Inflammatory back pain (if 4 or more of these present further investigation is indicated)

- Age of onset < 40 years
- Gradual onset
- Improves with exercise
- No improvement with rest
- Pain at night disturbing sleep

Other features to look out for

- Buttock and/or lower lumbar pain
- Early morning stiffness > 30mins
- > 3 months duration of back pain
- Good response to NSAIDs

Associated features

- Peripheral joint swelling (mainly in legs)
- Enthesitis (inflammation at tendon insertions e.g. Achilles tendonitis, plantar fasciitis)
- Uveitis, Inflammatory bowel disease, Psoriasis
- Family history of spondyloarthritis

Referral Advice

Rationale

- Average 9 year delay to diagnosis
- New treatments available which improve outcome

Referral Criteria

- any patient with **4 or more Inflammatory back pain features**
or
- Peripheral joint synovitis
or
- Enthesitis with uveitis/IBD/psoriasis

Investigations

- please send blood for FBC/ESR, U&E/LFT/CRP - the results will be available at the patient's OP appointment on Clinical Portal
- Pelvis Xray: sacroiliitis may be present but Xrays can be normal in early disease and therefore are not recommended if symptoms < 2 years

Management

Specialist review

- please refer patients to the rheumatology service
- if the results of investigations taken in Primary Care are available, treatment can be started at the first visit

Multi-Disciplinary Team

- all patients will be reviewed by a rheumatology physiotherapist and also by an occupational therapist as required
- regular review of disease activity and co-morbidities will be undertaken
- patients will be given written educational material and a contact number for a named Clinical Nurse Specialist

Treatment

- Regular exercise and specialist rheumatology physio input is crucial for all patients
- virtually all patients will require NSAID therapy
 - DMARDs are helpful for peripheral joint swelling
 - Biologic therapies are used to treat severe disease

Early diagnosis, referral and treatment improves outcomes!