

Assessment of the quality of care and financial impact of a virtual renal clinic compared with the traditional outpatient service model

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Disclosures None.



Summary

Background: Patients with chronic kidney disease (CKD) have better outcomes when they have access to specialist nephrology services early in the course of their disease. However, up to 30% of patients with advanced kidney disease face late referral. Virtual clinics represent a potentially innovative mechanism for early assessment of high patient volumes efficiently and cost effectively while maintaining high standards of care.

Methods: A retrospective observational cohort study was completed over a 4-year period from April 2004 to March 2008 at a regional nephrology centre within Northern Ireland. All new patient attendances at the nephrology clinic were identified and those managed via the virtual renal clinic approach were included in this study. A cost comparison of this innovative modality was made with the traditional outpatient service model.

Results: There were 427 patients (51.3% female, 48.7% male) managed through the virtual renal clinic. Comorbidities included 180 patients (42.1%) with known CKD and 31 patients (7.3%) with

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Conclusion: Delayed referral to a renal specialist adversely affects patient outcomes. This study suggests that the implementation of a virtual renal clinic for non-complex renal pathologies can offer a cost-effective, rapid referral mechanism for patient assessment combined with readily available specialist advice.

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