



About the Innovator

Siobhán Corcoran works in University Hospital Waterford (UHW) as a Clinical Specialist Physiotherapist in Musculoskeletal (MSK) Triage. Siobhán has a strong interest in improving pathways of care for Knee Osteoarthritis (OA) through streamlining of referrals to the most appropriate healthcare service, facilitating quicker access to surgery for those with the most urgent needs. She is currently leading a Sláintecare Funded Fast-Track Knee Pathway project within the HSE South-East region.



About Health Innovation Hub Ireland

Health services in Ireland and across the world are increasingly seeking innovations in health-related technology, products and services to drive improvements in the quality, access and value of healthcare delivery.

Health Innovation Hub Ireland (HIHI) brings enterprises and healthcare professionals together to **test, validate and help commercialise** innovative technologies, products and services, while enabling greater innovation in healthcare delivery.

HIHI supports the building of an **innovation culture** within the **health service** through a suite of knowledge building resources and guidance for healthcare professionals on the key steps from ideation to adoption.

HIHI works with those with ideas that address unmet healthcare needs to develop new products and processes within the healthcare system and stimulate a pipeline of new needs-driven innovations for the future.



The Healthcare Challenge

Elective orthopaedic waiting lists continue to grow nationally. For an elective orthopaedic outpatient department (OPD) appointment, a patient waits three to four years if deemed routine, and eighteen to twenty four months if deemed urgent.

Even when seen in the orthopaedic OPD, the minority (10%) require surgery, with the remaining patients (90%) suited to non-operative management. **Both cohorts of patient**

will wait similar periods despite having very different needs.

The National Musculoskeletal (MSK) Triage initiative has significantly helped to slow the rate of escalating orthopaedic waiting lists, and to bridge the gap between capacity and demand. However, with up to 85% of patients discharged on the first visit, this indicates **the vast majority of patients seen are better suited to care at local Primary Care level.**



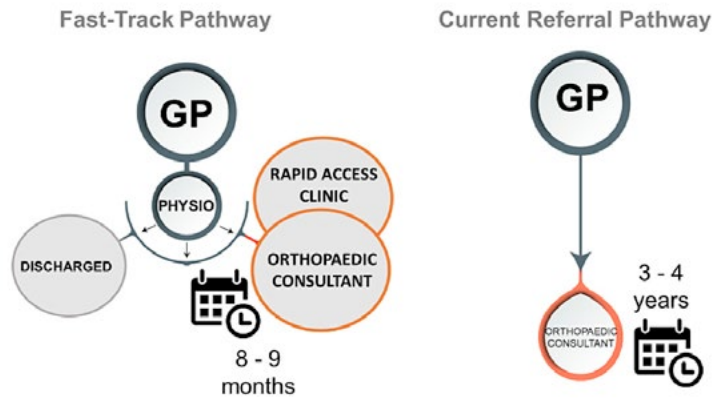
The solution

The Fast-Track Knee Pathway aims to create an efficient channel into University Hospital Waterford (UHW) and other hospitals for patients who are more likely to need orthopaedic surgical intervention.

The pathway involves the setting up of regional Osteoarthritis (OA) Knee Classes in Primary Care with dedicated senior physiotherapists and dietitians. Participants of the OA Knee Classes identified as requiring orthopaedic intervention can access a Rapid Access Clinic in UHW. The Rapid Access Clinic operates in conjunction with an MSK Triage physiotherapist and orthopaedic consultant where patients receive treatment or listing for surgery on the same day. This pathway allows significantly quicker access to care for patients with the most urgent needs.

During current COVID-19 restrictions it also ensures that footfall through the acute hospital is limited to those who

cannot have their care provided elsewhere. The pathway will facilitate a shift from orthopaedics to Primary Care physiotherapy as the first point in the referral pathway for patients with OA knee.



About HIHI Spark Ignite

The Health Innovation Hub collaborated with the Office of Nursing and Midwifery Service Development, National Doctors Training and Planning, and the Galway Local Enterprise Office to deliver the only bottom up, staff facing, innovation competition open to all HSE staff. The programme received over 150 applications from all disciplines and grades across the HSE. Thirty-six applications were selected to attend an innovation workshop to develop their idea by building a business proposition and preparing a pitch. The workshop participants pitched their ideas to a panel of experienced judges to win prize funding to develop their idea towards reality.

Outcome Report/Next Steps

Siobhán is working with UHW to pilot the Fast-Track Knee Pathway in the Southeast. Using Sláintecare Integration Funding, the pathway has been successfully launched in both Waterford and Wexford Primary Care with dedicated physiotherapy and dietetic staff delivering evidence-based care in line with international guidelines.

Since the project began, 200 patients were removed from Primary Care physiotherapy waiting lists with steady improvements in wait times. In excess of 300 patients were offered dietetic input, a service previously not available to this cohort of patients. Extensive GP engagement has also taken place through education evenings, newsletters, and informational videos.

Next steps include further regional and national rollout of the Fast-Track Knee Pathway.

Role of HIHI

Siobhán had clearly identified an unmet need in healthcare. Working on the frontline gave first-hand experience of increasing waiting times for patients and the increased burden on staff to ensure patients were receiving the most relevant treatment from the correct person in a timely manner. Siobhán used HIHI Spark Ignite programme to build the business case for the OA Knee Pathway.

Building on the Sláintecare Integration Funding, Siobhán used evidence from a pilot to scope out her project, identify stakeholders, determine their pain points, and develop a scalable version of the OA Knee Pathway applicable to other hospitals and primary care centres around the country. The benefits to patients, staff, and the hospital system are evident in the efficiencies delivered by this project.

Testimonial

The HIHI Spark Ignite competition was a fantastic experience with a unique opportunity as a HSE frontline clinician to access expertise from mentors in the business world. The workshops helped to transform my idea into a business model and reveal the true scalability of the Fast-Track Knee Pathway. There has also been wonderful follow-up since the competition with ongoing support from the entire HIHI team.



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