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# Connecting Care: A Pilot of a Virtual Outreach Service to Enhance Rehabilitation Access for Individuals With Traumatic Brain Injury in the UK

**Topic:** Rehabilitation Across the Continuum of Care

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## BACKGROUND

The centralization of major trauma services in the UK has improved survival rates by ensuring specialist care at Major Trauma Centres (MTCs). However, this has led to disparities in skills and resources between MTCs and District General Hospitals (DGHs), where a significant proportion of traumatic brain injury (TBI) patients receive care. Many patients are rapidly transferred back to DGHs after acute treatment, limiting access to specialist rehabilitation teams, including Rehabilitation Medicine consultants, neuro-therapists, and specialist nurses. Concerns have been raised about gaps in TBI rehabilitation pathways, the availability of appropriate expertise, and the organization of rehabilitation services. Addressing these challenges requires innovative approaches to support DGH clinicians in delivering high-quality rehabilitation.

This project aimed to improve the identification of appropriate rehabilitation pathways for TBI patients after discharge from an MTC and to enhance the confidence of therapists in DGHs in managing these patients.

## METHODS

Five DGHs within the regional Trauma Network were invited to participate in a virtual outreach project consisting of 25 bi-weekly video calls over a 12-month period. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected prospectively and retrospectively, assessing confidence in managing TBI patients, knowledge of local rehabilitation pathways, and participant feedback.

## RESULTS

Three DGHs participated, with attendees including therapists, specialist nurses, and a Rehabilitation Coordinator. Median confidence levels in managing TBI patients increased from 3 to 4 (on a scale of 1 to 5), while confidence in understanding rehabilitation pathways rose from 2 to 4. Discussions primarily focused on clinical advice (43%) and rehabilitation pathway guidance (11%). All participants reported that the project fostered stronger collaboration between the MTC and DGHs, with a unanimous interest in continuing virtual meetings. Key benefits identified included peer support, improved rehabilitation pathway navigation, and streamlined handover processes, reducing duplication and facilitating timely patient reviews.

## CONCLUSION

By leveraging existing resources, this virtual outreach initiative successfully created a collaborative network for knowledge sharing, best practice dissemination, and professional support. This model has the potential to be expanded to other complex injuries or conditions, strengthening multidisciplinary rehabilitation pathways across healthcare settings.

**Statement of Disclosures**

None

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