Physitrack: online exercise platform in a MSK physiotherapy service

Quick intro to yourself and any contact details you're happy to share …
My name is Louise Waters, I'm an extended Scope MSK Physiotherapist in East Lancashire but I also have a developing interest in Clinical Informatics. I can be contacted via email, louise.waters@elht.nhs.uk or on Twitter @Louise.Waters2.

What physio services do you provide? (e.g. specialty, conditions, location, patient demographics)
I work in an integrated adult Physiotherapy MSK Service. We use EMIS as our electronic patient record and have completed a trial of the online exercise software called Physitrack with 12 physiotherapists across three sites.

What tools are you using to deliver your physio services digitally?
Physitrack allows us to import our own branding and PDF patient information leaflets and has a huge library of outcome measures that we can send digitally to patients. It has a highly scored ORCHA rating*, a free patient app and an option for web based patient content. The product also allows video consultations from within the patient's exercise program which can be reviewed and/or amended as part of the consultation. It also has a new triage facility. We haven't tested this but it could revolutionise the way we accept, triage and manage referrals and waiting lists.

How have these services replaced face to face contact?
Using video consultations wasn't part of the original audit outcomes, rather we were moving to a paperless system. However, COVID-19 changed the way we reviewed patients overnight. Those 12 clinicians were able to use video telephone consultations for new and follow-up patients whilst other staff only had telephone review appointments available. Physiotherapy assessment and treatment without the visual cues was challenging.

What is the clinician's experience of using the digital tools?
As with any digital innovation, there is inevitable cultural change as new ways of working are adopted and embraced. Some initial additional time and training was required to 'learn' the new product and configure it to our Service requirements. All clinicians ultimately valued Physitrack and didn't want to revert back to the old system. Our Service saved in excess of 25,000 pieces of paper in 3 months.

Do you have any patient feedback on digital physio service offer?
Very few of our patients asked for a paper print out of their exercises. Many embraced the full functionality of the app, remotely tracking their progress and recording their pain scores within the product without being asked to do so. These outcomes were visible to the clinician, meaning some patient 'follow-up' could actually be done remotely. Many patients commented that they liked the smartphone calendar reminder to complete their exercises too. It was our experience that patients adapted more or less immediately.

Any top tips to others exploring using digital tools in physio services?
Preparation is everything. There is huge value in taking the time to plan and test new innovations, ironing out inevitable glitches, before full roll-out.

Training should be comprehensive and some additional time given to staff during early implementation.

Have a designated member of the team to lead the project, and be responsible for configuration, troubleshooting and giving extra support to those who may need it.

* ORCHA are the market leading app review company. They review health apps based on their data security, clinical content, evidence base and user experience giving a percentage score and level of recommendation (more details at https://www.orcha.co.uk/our-solution/the-orcha-review/)