

Developing a Physiotherapy Foot Surgery Service and Patient Pathway

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Purpose

The foot surgery service was expanded to undertake more complex foot surgeries, this required an increase in physiotherapy input. Adaptations were made to our provision of physiotherapy to accommodate patients undergoing complex foot surgeries, patients with multiple co-morbidities and patients with complex social needs.

Aim

To develop a robust protocol-led pathway including pre-op education and assessment.
Increase attendance of our pre-op assessment "Foot School".
Reduce length of stay (LOS).

Method

Feedback from physiotherapists, physiotherapy assistant practitioners, the consultant and nurses was gathered on the existing service and what could be done to improve this. From this information, a series of Plan Do Study Act (PDSA) cycles from Langley et al (2009) were implemented to gradually make changes to the service.

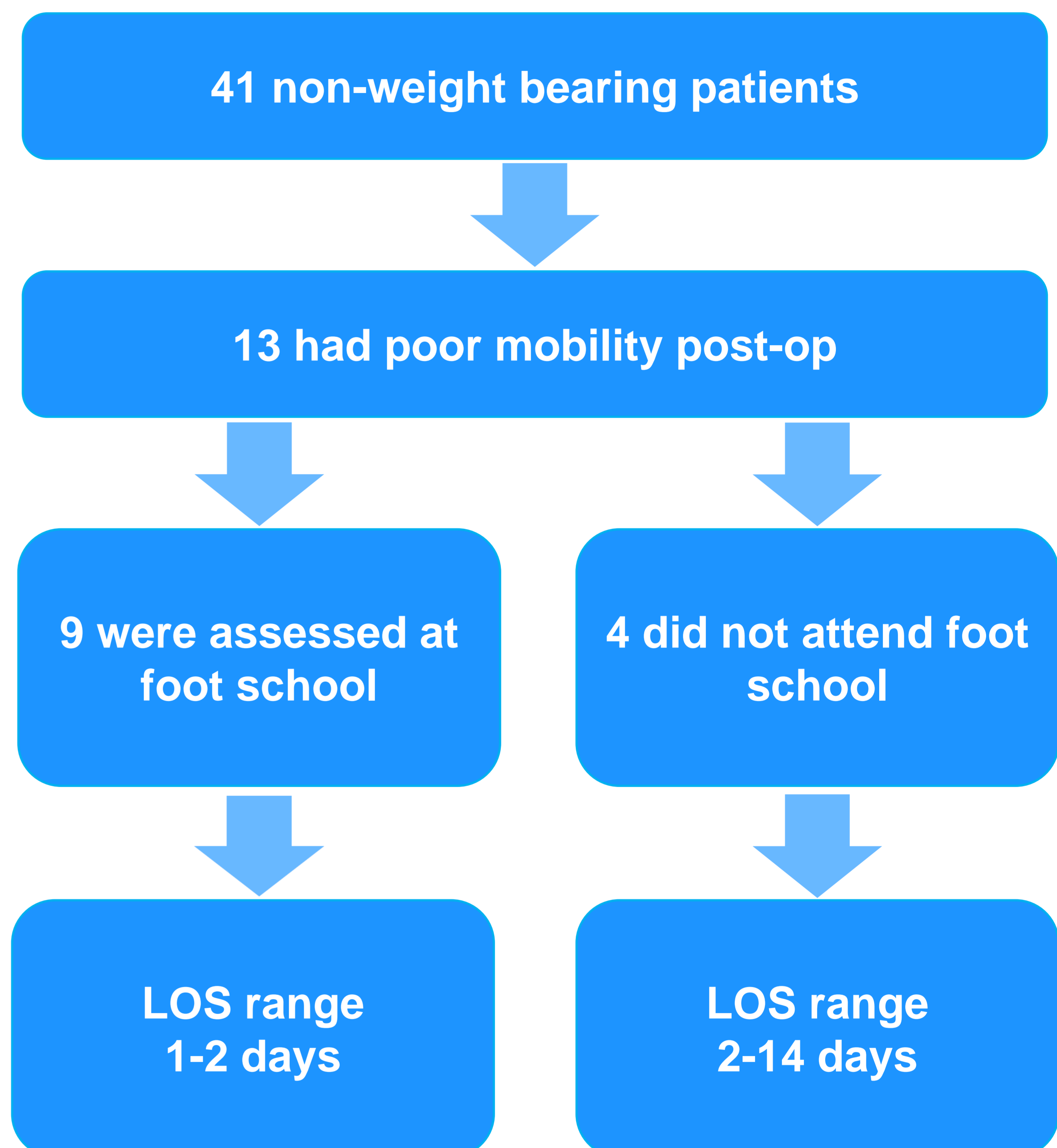
- A protocol was developed to guide clinicians in how patients should be progressed and what footwear was required.
- The pre-op assessment "Foot School" was changed from ad hoc referrals to a blanket referral to increase attendance to above 70%. This was linked with our inpatient service, outpatient follow up clinic and onward referral system to complete the pathway.
- A physiotherapist was allocated to work alongside the existing nurse-led and consultant-led follow up clinics to progress patients' mobility.
- Referrals to local MSK services were undertaken by the physiotherapy team rather than the consultant.



Results

Median average Foot School attendance per month was increased from ~33% to 73%

Non-Weight Bearing (NWB) patients who attended Foot School, who were identified as most likely to require a longer admission, were found to have a decrease in their LOS compared to those that did not attend.



Conclusion

A physiotherapy assessment (at the time of the patient being listed for surgery) can have a significant impact on LOS. The patient pathway provides a more comprehensive service than previous practice.

Implications

Where geographically possible, all foot surgery patients are assessed pre-operatively and then follow the patient pathway. This enables patient's mobility, expectations, co-morbidities and social needs to be identified, and where possible, addressed prior to admission for surgery.