Neurology Services in Northern Ireland

Dr Raeburn Forbes
Consultant Neurologist
Southern HSC Trust
Northern Ireland Demography

- 1.7 million people
- 5 HSC Trusts
  - Most regional services provided via Belfast HSC Trust, but also has a DGH function
  - DGH neurologists appointed from 2003 onwards
  - Still long waiting times (26 weeks not unusual for routine, 9 weeks for urgent – trust-trust variability++)
  - Non-recurrent independent sector provision to maintain access targets
  - Recurrent funding difficult to secure
  - Growth in numbers of neurologists offset by reduction in ability of general medicine to absorb non-complex secondary care neurology
- NB - Most neurological care is delivered in primary care by GPs
Current Manpower

• Regional Neuroscience Centre – Belfast HSC Trust
  – 16 beds
  – 10.5 WTE consultants (7 have outreach clinics)
  – 8 Registrars
  – 3 Epilepsy Nurses, 4 MS Nurses, 2 PD Nurses, 1 MND Care centre Co-ordinator

• 4 DGH based services
  – Craigavon – 2 Consultants, 1 Registrar, 1 visiting consultant, 1 Epilepsy, 1 PD and 2 MS Nurse Specialists
  – Ulster Hospital – 2 Consultants (developing GPwSI headache)
  – Altnagelvin – 2 Consultants, 2 visiting consultants, 1 Epilepsy and 1 MS Nurse Specialist
  – Antrim Area Hospital – 1 consultant, 2 visiting consultants
Innovations

• Email triage services
  – Dr Victor Patterson, Western HSC Trust

• Virtual Clinic
  – Dr Raeburn Forbes / Dr Orla Gray
  – Southern HSC Trust
  – 20% triaged to investigation
    • 90% of these do not need to attend
    • 10% of these will still attend
    • Development of *smart* triage systems to support decision making eg eCeptionist software
Regional Specialist Clinics

- Epilepsy
- Movement Disorders
- Multiple Sclerosis / Neuro-inflammatory
- Neuro-disability/rehabilitation
- Cognitive
- Neuro-muscular
- ??Headache
  - One neurologist with interest based in DGH (me)
  - Occipital Nerve Block, IV DHE, Botox etc provided
  - Still no specialist nurse for headache
  - GP Education and Support is Vital
  - Accepts tertiary referrals from other neurologists
The Future

• Regional review awaited ?2012
  – 3 additional consultants mooted (by who?)
• Neurological Alliance Gaining Momentum
  – Crucial if political pressure required
• Re-configuration towards network model
  – Remove out-reach general clinics
  – Out-reach sub-specialty clinics
  – Additional DGH based general neurologists
• Virtual Clinic/ Supported Triage may become essential
• Joint ABN/RCP Statement of June 2011
• Reduce dependence on independent sector ad hoc provision