



# Developing the York Sativex Service

 **Let's stop MS together**

# Introduction



Julie Taylor (*Multiple Sclerosis (MS) Specialist Nurse & Prescriber*) and Caroline Brown (*Extended Scope Practitioner Physiotherapist in Spasticity Management*) are both based within York and Scarborough NHS Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust. They share their experience of setting up a new Sativex clinic in a non specialist centre.

## Development of York Sativex Service

*York and Scarborough NHS Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust*

In 2019, NICE guidance (NG144) recommended the use of Sativex for symptom improvement in adult patients with moderate to severe spasticity due to multiple sclerosis, and who had not responded adequately to other anti-spasticity medication. Following this, the Neurology Team at York started to look at how a Sativex service could be developed.

The neuro - pharmacist was involved in the development of a Shared Care Agreement between the hospital and the CCGs to present at the Medicines Commissioning Committee to establish a clear pathway, although there were some delays due to the pandemic.

A 6 month structured project, which included funding for Caroline to work an extra 2.5 hours a week, was set up to establish a standard procedure and associated documentation. This included proformas, consent forms, and patient information as guided by the Shared Care Agreement.

Prior to starting assessing patients some training was completed with GW Pharma, an online training session (MS Society & MS Academy) was attended, that really helped to develop knowledge about Sativex treatment, and information from other centres with Sativex services was sort.

By September 2021, everything was in place for the service to start and a pilot of two patients who were identified by the Neurologist and met the criteria was completed successfully. They both continued on treatment after the trial and the decision was made to roll this out further.

Patient numbers being referred for Sativex have expanded as awareness within the Neurology department has increased. Patients are often identified by specialist

nurses and therapists within Neurology, although a formal referral is always required from the consultant following discussion.

During the initial appointment a detailed assessment is completed, including patient's rating of spasticity, objective markers and specific goals are established. Patients also complete a consent form, are given written literature and a diary to complete with the titration guide attached. Adopting a health coaching approach, which includes asking patients what they hope to gain from the appointment, helps to understand their expectations. This also helps to guide the appointment and discussions about other treatments, if appropriate.

Once a patient has started on treatment, they are reviewed by Caroline and Julie within the Sativex fortnightly clinic at 4, 8, 16, 28 and 40 weeks. The first two appointments are face to face within the clinic and then some follow up appointments are virtual, either by telephone or video. If the patients gain significant benefit the hospital provides the first 2 months of Sativex prescription, after which the GPs take over, as stated in the Shared Care Agreement. After a year patients are seen by the consultant and then any further queries are addressed within the MS specialist nurse clinics.

The combination of knowledge and experience (Caroline's extensive knowledge of spasticity and Julie's experience as a MS nurse and Prescriber) has been really beneficial for the setup of this clinic and for patients. Some patients have not been eligible for Sativex, but have benefited from seeing a specialist physiotherapist and specialist nurse together to discuss other options for managing their symptoms, including being offered alternative treatments or signposting to other services when needed.

Managing patient's expectations and informative, supportive communication is essential. Therefore it is imperative that all organisations, including hospital trusts and multiple sclerosis charities manage information about this treatment appropriately, so that people understand all the facts around criteria and eligibility.

The Sativex clinic at York Hospital has been running for over a year and is now established. The service is being evaluated, including with patient satisfaction questionnaires.

**If anyone would like to discuss this further with Julie and Caroline they are based in the Neurosciences Department at York Hospital (01904 725752).**

## **We're the MS Society.**

Our community is here for you through the highs, lows and everything in between. We understand what life's like with MS.

Together, we are strong enough to stop MS.

## **Contact us**

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