# Referral Guidelines – Ankylosing spondylitis and Spondyloarthritis

## Primary Care Assessment

# Inflammatory back pain (if 4 or more of these present further investigation is indicated)

- •Age of onset < 40 years
- Gradual onset
- Improves with exercise
- •No improvement with rest
- Pain at night disturbing sleep

#### Other features to look out for

- •Buttock and/or lower lumbar pain
- •Early morning stiffness > 30mins
- •> 3 months duration of back pain
- •Good response to NSAIDs

#### **Asssociated features**

- Peripheral joint swelling (mainly in legs)
- •Enthesitis (inflammation at tendon insertions e.g. Achilles tendonitis, plantar fasciitis)
- •Uveitis, Inflammatory bowel disease, Psoriasis
- •Family history of spondyloarthritis

### Referral Advice

#### Rationale

- •Average 9 year delay to diagnosis
- •New treatments available which improve outcome

#### **Referral Criteria**

•any patient with <u>4 or more</u> Inflammatory back pain features

or

Peripheral joint synovitis

or

Enthesitis with uveitis/IBD/psoriasis

#### Investigations

- •please send blood for FBC/ESR, U&E/LFT/CRP - the results will be available at the patient's OP appointment on Clinical Portal
- •Pelvis Xray: sacroiliitis may be present but Xrays can be normal in early disease and therefore are not recommended if symptoms < 2 years

## Management

#### **Specialist review**

- •please refer patients to the rheumatology service
- •if the results of investigations taken in Primary Care are available, treatment can be started at the first visit

#### **Multi-Disciplinary Team**

- all patients will be reviewed by a rheumatology physiotherapist and also by an occupational therapist as required
- •regular review of disease activity and comorbidities will be undertaken
- •patients will be given written educational material and a contact number for a named Clinical Nurse Specialist

#### Treatment

- Regular exercise and specialist rheumatology physio input is crucial for all patients
- virtually all patients will require NSAID therapy
  - •DMARDs are helpful for peripheral joint swelling
  - •Biologic therapies are used to treat severe disease

## Early diagnosis, referral and treatment improves outcomes!