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Post Operative Orthopaedic Outpatients: The Introduction of a Physiotherapy Arthroplasty Review Clinic.

The ageing population and rising incidence of obesity in Australia has led to an increase in the prevalence of osteoarthritis and an increase in joint replacement surgery. Orthopaedic outpatient clinics in hospitals, such as The Alfred in Victoria, have limited resources available to meet the increasing needs of our population. This presents an opportunity for alternative models of care in orthopaedic outpatient clinics to be explored. The Physiotherapy Arthroplasty Review Clinic was introduced at The Alfred in October 2009, as a partnership between the Orthopaedic Unit and the Physiotherapy Department. In this clinic an advanced practice musculoskeletal physiotherapist is utilised instead of an orthopaedic surgeon to conduct routine post operative orthopaedic reviews. Patients who undergo primary, uncomplicated hip and knee joint replacement surgery are included, and are reviewed post operatively at two weeks, six weeks, six months and twelve months. The orthopaedic surgeon only reviews patients at six weeks. The physiotherapist reports the patient's outcomes to the orthopaedic surgeon and together they review the patient's imaging. If any red flags are identified by the physiotherapist a review is organised with the orthopaedic surgeon. Eighty six patients have been reviewed so far. Only three patients have required a review with an orthopaedic surgeon. Patient satisfaction survey results have demonstrated excellent support for this new model of care. The objective of the Physiotherapy Arthroplasty Review Clinic is to improve the utilization of the orthopaedic surgeon's time and expertise, while improving the patient's orthopaedic outpatient experience.