

Implementation of a Physical Therapy Telephone Triage System in the Home Hospital Setting

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Background: The role of physical therapy within the home hospital medical team focuses on optimizing patient safety and fall reduction, as well as striving to facilitate the patient's return to prior functional status. The ability for physical therapists to assess all patients for whom a PT consult is placed in the optimal order is challenging in the home hospital environment given geographic constraints. To better allocate our physical therapy resources, we introduced a telephone triage system to improve our ability to prioritize our patients who have the highest clinical need.

Methods

- 60 bed home hospital program
- PT department consists of 4 FTE and 1 per diem, staffing 7 days per week
- Data analyzed from 6/12-26/2025 and 7/14-27/2025.
- Every patient with a PT order was assessed via the telephone triage system to determine if the patient requires an in-person PT assessment versus screening through a telephone encounter.

Findings

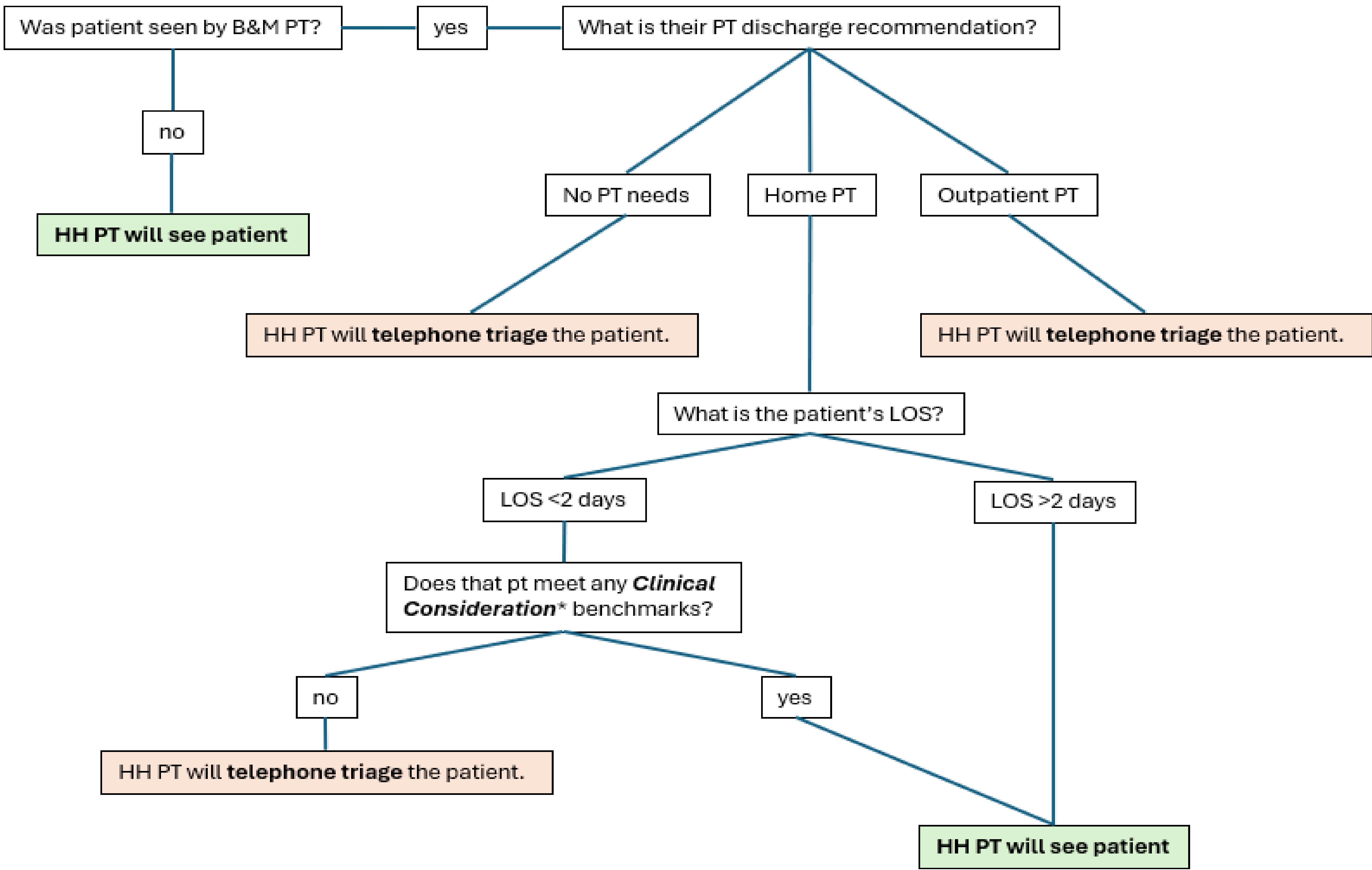
- 78 total patients with PT orders
 - 14 (18%) received a telephone screen
 - 9 (64% of those screened) were triaged out of needing home hospital PT
 - 4 were seen in person (2 met a clinical consideration, 2 used TS for prioritization)
 - 1 pt escalated prior to an in-person visit
 - 68 patients (87%) were seen in person
 - 50 (74%) seen within 24 hours of consultation or transfer
 - 17 (25%) within 48 hours
 - 1 (1%) within 72 hours
- No patients experienced an adverse event as a result of triaging or delay in PT interventions.

References:
Hobbs JA, Boysen JF, McGarry KA, Thompson JM, Nordrum JT. Development of a unique triage system for acute care physical therapy and occupational therapy services: an administrative case report. Phys Ther. 2010 Oct;90(10):1519-29. doi: 10.2522/ptj.20090166. Epub 2010 Aug 5. PMID: 20688874.

Mofina A, Miller J, Tranmer J, Donnelly C. Home care rehabilitation therapy services for individuals with multimorbidity: A rapid review. J Comorb. 2020 Dec 1;10:2235042X20976282. doi: 10.1177/2235042X20976282. PMID: 33312962; PMCID: PMC7716071.

Conflict of Interest: None for all authors

Telephone Triage Screening Tool



*Clinical Considerations

- Diagnosis or current medical needs
 - Airway clearance
 - Recent fall, weakness
- Ampac score <20
- Level of assist documented in PT note (CTG or > would need PT assessment)
- Do they have appropriate social supports set up on d/c?
- Are there any other observations in the home that warrant PT eval?
 - Cognitive concerns
 - Environmental barriers
 - Not using recommended assistive device

Key Takeaways

- Clinical information obtained from the medical chart can facilitate appropriate triaging of home hospital physical therapy needs.
- By avoiding unnecessary in-person visits through application of the telephone triage system, patients with the highest clinical needs are seen sooner.
- Based on the above results, we were able to reduce our in-person caseload by 11%.
- The triaging system demonstrates a 75% success rate of appropriately identifying patients who do not need home hospital PT

