

Implementation of an Audiology-led Paediatric Clinic, combating lengthy ENT waiting times; outcomes from the Gold Coast University Hospital ENT-Allied Health First Contact Service

[Jennifer Eakin](#) Gold Coast Health
jennifer.eakin@health.qld.gov.au




Background

- Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT) care is a key component in the management of children with hearing loss.
- To help combat lengthy ENT waiting times at the GCUH, an Audiology-led Paediatric First Contact service was established in May '16 alongside four other ENT-Allied Health First Contact pathways.
- The paediatric pathway aims to direct patients, not immediately require medical or surgical intervention, away from the specialist waiting list and into an audiology clinic for their first point of care.

• Expected benefits

- ✓ Reduced waiting times
- ✓ Improved access to hearing tests and non-medical interventions
- ✓ High quality care
- ✓ ENT specialists freed up for surgical or complex cases

 [Service model and inclusion criteria](#)

- Growing body of evidence, predominantly from physiotherapy [1,2] and emerging from other disciplines including speech pathology and audiology [3-5], to support efficiency and safety of Allied Health First Contact Clinics for non-surgical interventions.

Aim: To measure service outcomes and review preliminary data assessing concordance of management decisions between Audiologist and ENT.

Method: Prospective cohort studies
Regression analysis of waiting times and descriptive statistics
N = 156 referred and seen by ENT in 2yrs prior to new service
N = 158 transition (referred pre service but redirected once service established)
N = 150 referred and seen initial 12mths post new service
40 subjects analysed for concordance

Results:

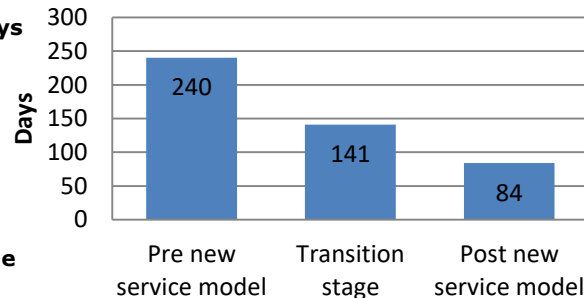
- Regression analysis showed **mean reduction of 163 days waiting time** for patients suitable to be seen in the Audiology-led clinic ($p < 0.005$).
- **32.8% of patients were discharged** from the Audiology-led clinic **without needing ENT care.**
- **98% of parents were satisfied or very satisfied** with the service.


 [Patient satisfaction data and comments](#)

- **No patients were discharged** from Audiology **where the ENT recommended monitoring or treatment**
- **Total agreement on management** between Audiologist and ENT in **31/40 cases**
- **More recommendations from Audiologist** compared to ENT (e.g. speech pathology referrals)



Mean waiting times from referral to first appointment

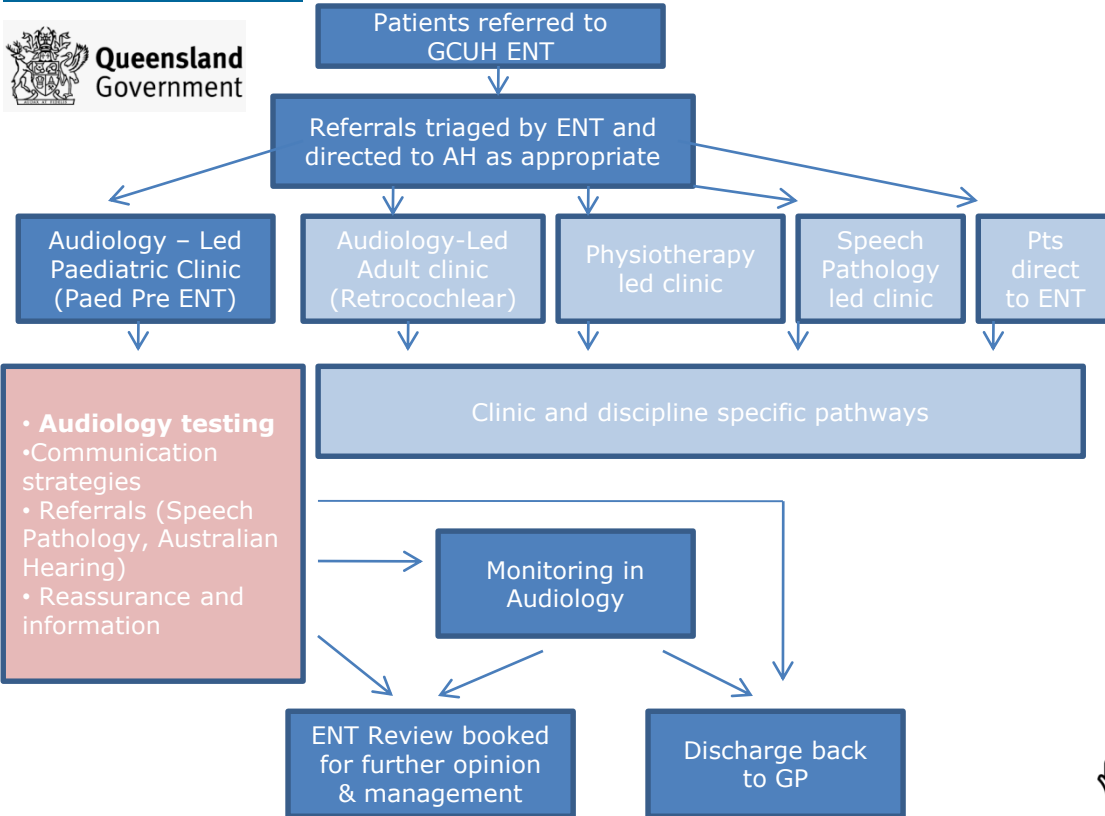


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ENT Allied Health Led Pathways at Gold Coast University Hospital



Triaging Criteria for Audiology-led Paediatric Pathway	
Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Category 2 & 3 ENT referrals • 0-16yrs of age • Routine middle ear disease: glue ear, recurrent acute otitis media, otitis media with effusion • Hearing loss / concerns • Speech and language delays • Learning / attention / concentration difficulties 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Category 1 ENT referrals • Over 16 yrs • Sudden HL • Otitis externa • Otorrhoea • Current tympanic membrane perforations • Chronic supportive otitis media (CSOM) • Pre-existing SNHL • Wax impaction • Cholesteatoma • Retraction pockets • Other ENT symptoms only
<p>*Patients meeting above criteria as well as a syndrome, complex medical condition or other ENT conditions can be included in the Audiology-led pathway but will also continue on to ENT prior to discharge or for management.</p>	

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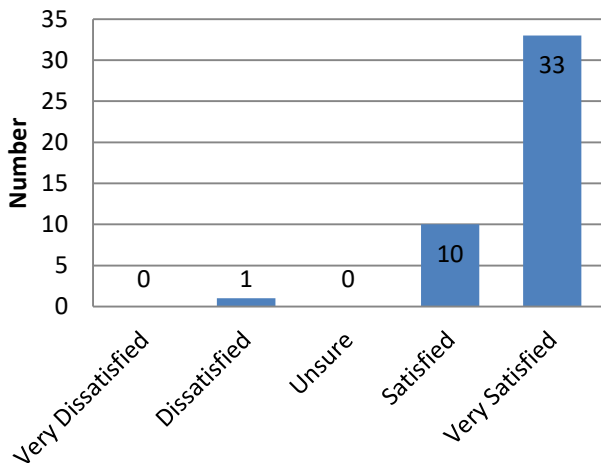
Patient Satisfaction N= 44

The Audiologist we saw was lovely. She explained the test results and used visual aids to further clarify my daughters hearing condition.

With both myself and two boys, I have had a lot of dealings with the GCUH and this was by far the best I have had. The wait was short, the staff were very friendly and informative and I felt like my concerns were addressed. A very different experience from my first son 3 years ago with the same problem. Well done to a great improvement.

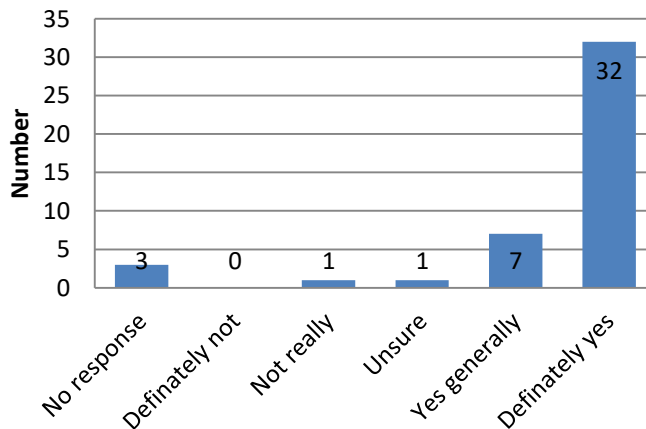
The ladies were very professional and also friendly. I had total confidence in their skills.

Were you satisfied with the service?



98% of parents were either satisfied or very satisfied with the service.

Were you confident that the clinician addressed your concern?



87% of parents were confident that the audiologist was able to address their concern.

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Acknowledgements and References

Project Team Acknowledgements

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Dr Vicky Stewart,	Advanced Physiotherapist, Gold Coast Health
Dr Tamsin Smith,	A/Advanced Physiotherapist, Gold Coast Health
Melissa Lawrie,	Director of Speech Pathology and Audiology, Gold Coast Health

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