Title: Implementing Patient-Initiated Follow-Up for Otitis Externa: A Retrospective Audit at a Tertiary ENT Centre

Abstract

Objective: To evaluate the impact of a formal Patient-Initiated Follow-Up (PIFU) protocol on reducing follow-up visits for otitis externa (OE) patients at a tertiary centre.

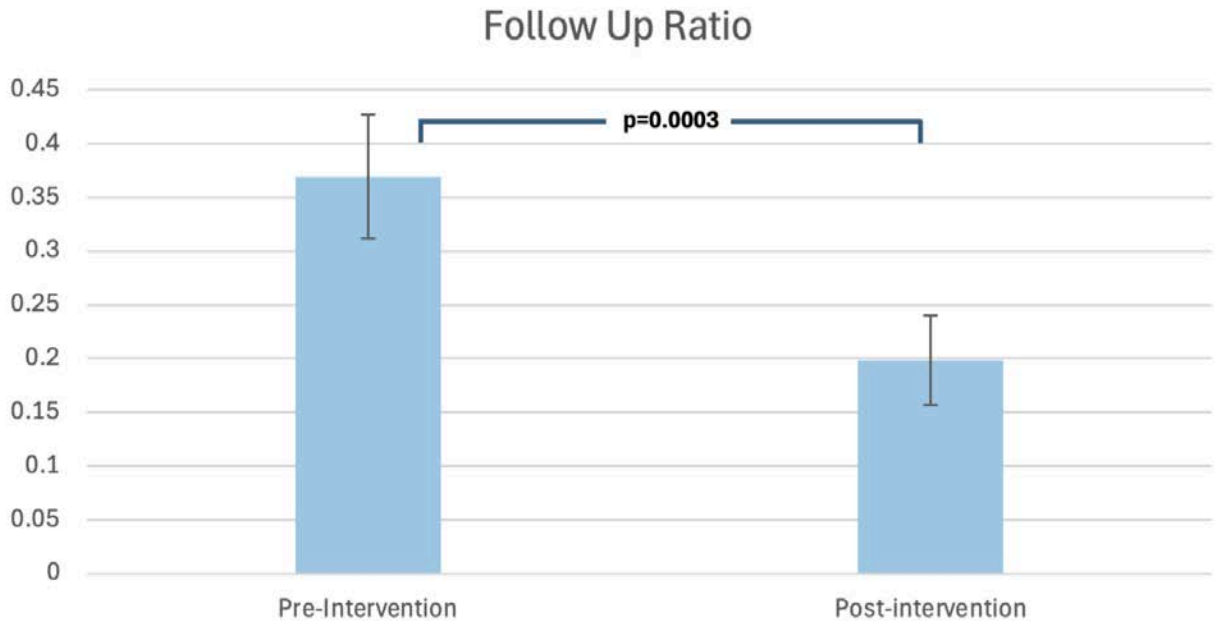
Methods: A retrospective audit of consecutive adult OE patients presenting to an ENT ambulatory unit between November 2023 and September 2024 was conducted. Data collected included patient demographics, visit counts, and follow-up rates. PIFU was introduced in May 2024, providing patients with a leaflet detailing their diagnosis, management plan, and instructions for initiating follow-up if needed. The study adheres to the Standards for Quality Improvement Reporting Excellence (SQUIRE 2.0) Guidelines. An unpaired t-test was performed to compare follow-up ratios pre- and post-intervention.

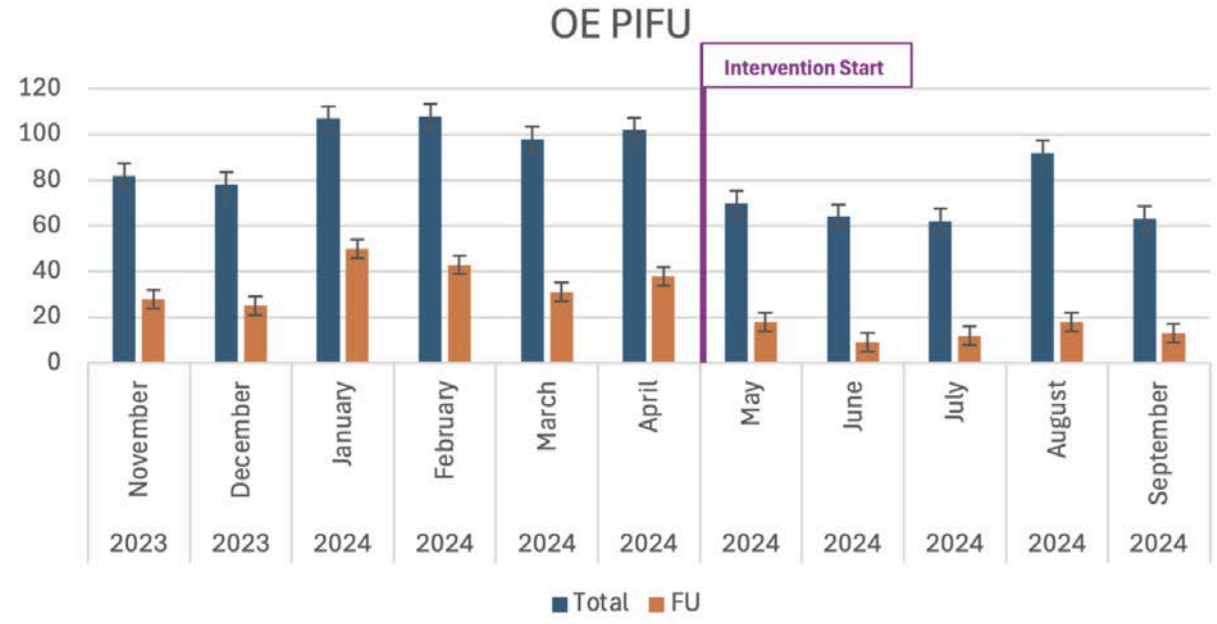
Results: A total of 571 patients were included pre-intervention, with 351 patients included post-intervention. The mean follow-up ratio decreased significantly from 0.37 to 0.20 ($p < 0.001$). No unplanned re attendance occurred within the follow-up period.

Discussion: The findings align with previous quality improvement initiatives demonstrating that structured PIFU protocols reduce unnecessary appointments. While the intervention was effective, further research is required to assess long-term outcomes, patient satisfaction, and scalability.

Implications for Practice: PIFU offers an effective strategy for optimising ENT outpatient care, reducing unnecessary follow-ups, and enhancing patient self-management. Expanding PIFU to other ENT conditions could further improve healthcare resource utilisation.

Keywords: Otitis externa, Patient-Initiated Follow-Up, PS/QI, ENT, Health service optimisation


Follow Up Ratio
0.45
0.4
0.35
0.3
0.25
0.2
0.15
0.1
0.05
0
p=0.0003
Pre-Intervention
Post-intervention


OE PIFU
Intervention Start
120
100
80
60
40
20
0
November 2023
December 2023
January 2024
February 2024
March 2024
April 2024
May 2024
June 2024
July 2024
August 2024
September 2024
Total
FU