



Keeping you up to date with **Lothian Referral Guidelines**- for previous e-Bulletin issues see [News](#)

Lead Referral Advisor - Becky Cheesbrough

Welcome to our Autumn e-bulletin. As the leaves turn and we hurtle towards the end of the year, our team has been busy behind the scenes. This edition features information about the recently updated SCRG, news about the MoE pages and a peek into the recent RefTalks PLIG update.

We say a fond farewell to our wonderful colleague, Heather who is retiring. We'll miss her wisdom, warmth and dedication to the RefHelp team.

And finally.....



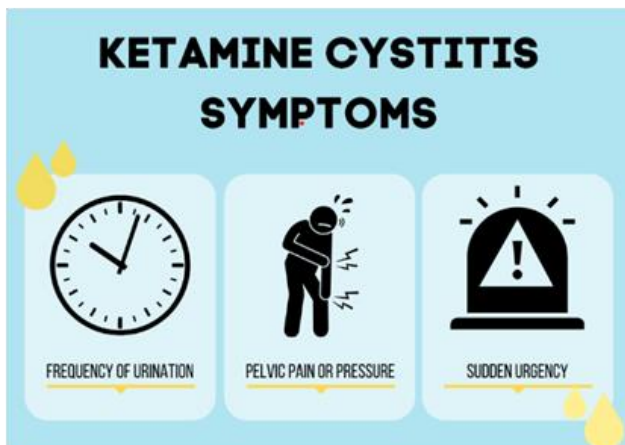
"I know lots of jokes about retirement, but none of them work"

Until next time, *Becky*

Odd urinary symptoms, especially in young people....think **KETAMINE**.

There is now widespread use of recreational **ketamine** across Lothian (and Scotland) amongst young people which can lead to serious consequences, especially for the urinary tract. Sadly, people are often unaware until too late and have irreversible damage (the worst being major bladder dysfunction, hydronephrosis and even renal failure).

Please remember to consider urinary symptoms in anyone taking ketamine.



And conversely, ask **any young people** presenting with urinary symptoms, or erectile dysfunction, whether they use ketamine (or other drugs).

Some people may say 'no' because they are embarrassed or frightened to admit illicit drug use and it is worth explaining why you asked the

question. Early urinary symptoms due to ketamine may be reversible but continued use can lead to permanent and severe damage.

For further information, including resources and referral guidelines - please see our new [Ketamine RefHelp page](#). This topic is also covered in detail in our recent webinar - look out for the link on our [RefTalk page](#) - available shortly.



All things biochemical!

We now have updated our [Laboratory Services page](#) - and added a new [Biochemistry](#) one. This includes 'realistic medicine' updates on [hypomagnesaemia](#) and [hyponatraemia](#). They outline the baseline investigations which GPs sometimes overlook - and doing those both makes life simpler and reduces risk. Don't forget to think Chest X-ray for SIADH! Again, look out for our recent [RefTalk](#) which covers both topics (to be uploaded shortly) and the imminent PLIG newsletter too!

Too early, too late, too short....

We now have a suite of pages for [precocious / delayed puberty](#) in both boys and girls, giving straight forward step-by-step guides for assessment. They also give a handy reference point for the latest Royal College of Paediatrics & Child Health growth charts - a [page to be saved!](#) A reminder too of [adrenarche](#) - how that differs from puberty itself and when to be concerned. Finally, [short stature](#) - how to assess, the importance of mid-parental height and the red flags. Many thanks to our Paediatric Endocrinology colleagues for all their work.

Updates are coming!

Since the newly updated [Scottish Referral Guidelines for Suspected Cancer](#) were launched on the 6th of August, you'll have seen the note below on many pages on RefHelp:

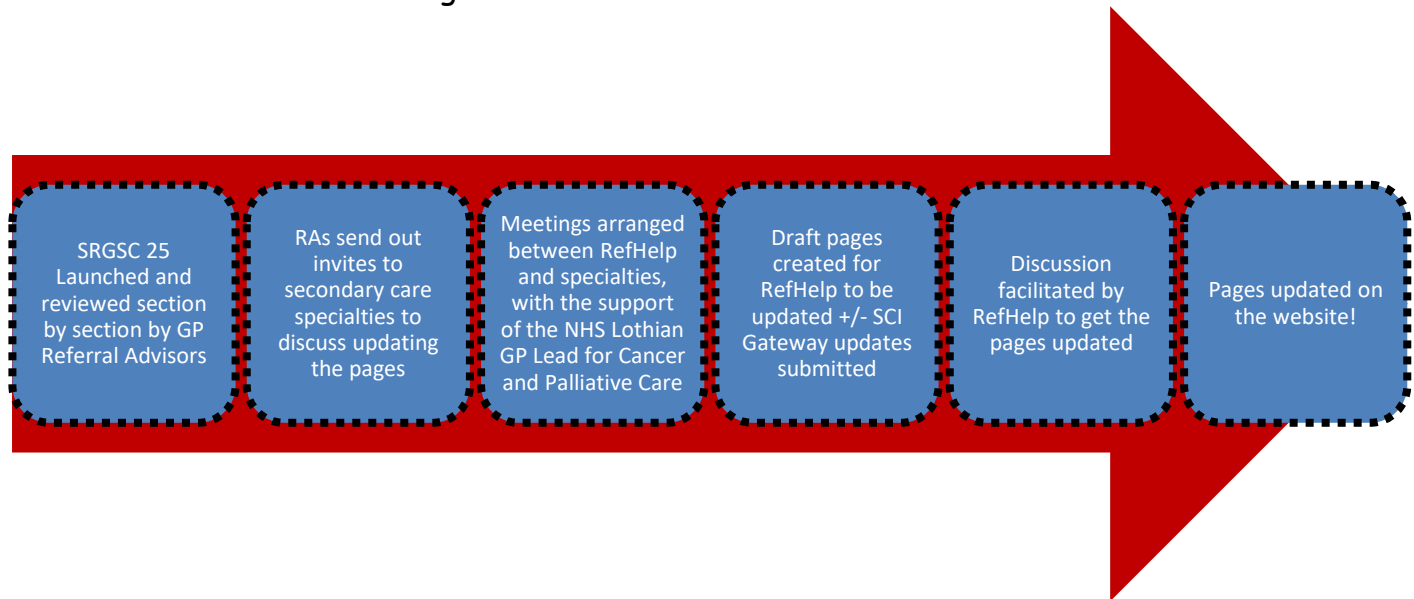
The Scottish Cancer Referral Guidelines have been updated and went live on Wednesday, 6th August 2025. We are working hard to update all relevant information on the RefHelp website. If you would like to see the guidelines please click here [Scottish Referral Guidelines for Suspected Cancer 2025 - gov.scot](#) 

Some pages have been updated, but others are still being worked on. So why does it take so long?!

Firstly, the process takes time because of the volume of work. Referrals for patients where cancer is a possible diagnosis form a significant percentage of Primary Care referrals in NHS Lothian, and as a result, information about the various referral routes for a possible cancer diagnosis takes up a lot of RefHelp pages.

And secondly the process takes time because of the depth of the work. Since the guidelines were launched every GP Referral Advisor has been working hard with Secondary Care to make sure these pages are updated in a systematic and robust way. In some cases, the updates also need the GP Referral Advisors to work with eHealth to update or create new SCI Gateway

Referral pathways. Each area is slightly different, but the flowchart below gives an idea of how much of this work is being carried out:



The process does take time, but that's to make sure that these comprehensive evidence-based guidelines are giving information on the referral process for **NHS Lothian**, and that the information is presented in the RefHelp format, so that when referrers are trying to consult the guidance quickly, perhaps with the patient still in the room, they can find the referral path that they need to know about as soon as possible.

In NHS Lothian we are fortunate that Dr Lorna Porteous, the NHS Lothian GP Lead for Cancer and Palliative Care, is also the Co-Clinical Lead Scottish Primary Care Cancer Group and was Vice-Chair for the 2025 Cancer Guidelines update. Lorna has been supporting all the Referral Advisors as we work hard to update RefHelp. Her expert knowledge has been invaluable.

RefHelp MOE Pages

The RefHelp MOE Pages are getting an update - page by page!

We have lot of excellent Medicine of the Elderly services in NHS Lothian. They see patients in a wide variety of community facilities and services needed in different areas. As a result, we have different types of MOE Pages:

settings from Hospital at Home, to Outpatient Clinics, to Day Hospital, to the specialist MOE Dizziness pathway. MOE Services work differently in different localities allowing them to be responsive to

- [Hospital at Home pages](#) - these pages give details on the four HAH services - East Lothian, Edinburgh, Midlothian and West Lothian. They detail how to refer and what kind of patients the Hospital at Home service can support. Some referrals are straightforward, but the MOE teams are always keen to stress that if a referrer isn't sure and wants to discuss a case to ask to be put through to the team - they're happy to discuss.
- Symptom specific pages - these include Delirium, Dizziness, Frailty and Weight loss. These pages give guidance on these familiar MOE presentations.
- Specific MOE specialist services - these include the [Dizziness & Balance \(MoE\) page](#) and the [Parkinsons \(MoE\) page](#). Both of these pages have been updated in the past six

months. And the PD MOE team will be leading a RefTalk educational session in the new year.

- [Medicine of the Elderly Services pages](#) - these pages detail the various outpatient services that are available. The Edinburgh South pages have recently been updated, and work is ongoing to update the East Lothian and Edinburgh North pages. The [Edinburgh South](#) update was particularly timely as it gives detail on how to continue to make referrals, as services move from Liberton Hospital to Ellens Glen Hospital.

Please remember that in most cases Primary Care do NOT need to refer to multiple specialities alongside MOE Referral, for the same problem, e.g. cardiology AND MOE for syncope. Referral to MOE alone is usually sufficient. If the MOE team assess that additional specialty input is required, they will arrange this.

Like RefHelp, MOE services in NHS Lothian are really keen to listen to referrers so if there is any further information you would like to see on the MOE pages, please do get in touch!

As my retirement draws ever closer, this is the last time I will be editing the RefHelp eBulletin.

RefHelp was one of the key projects that attracted me to the OutpatientRedesign team and what a roller-coaster of a journey it has been! I wanted a new challenge and to learn new skills and RefHelp has not disappointed.

Further developing my I.T. skills has been fascinating, challenging and downright frustrating but when you are surrounded by the excellent Web team that we have in Lothian there is nothing that can't be 'sorted'.

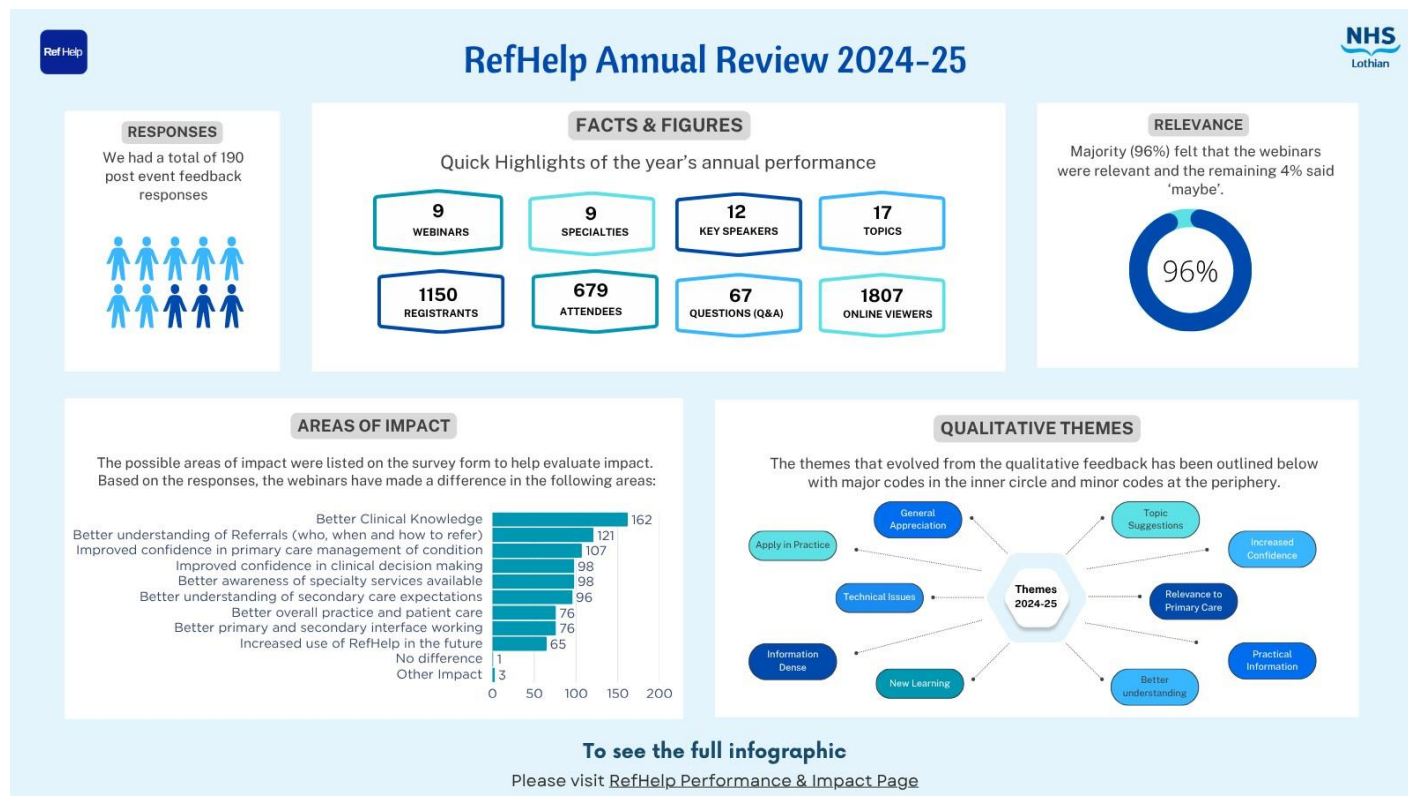
When I first started 9 years ago, there were just under 200 chaotic pages of guidelines. Three web platforms later we now have 1,064 of slick, professional, local & national evidence-based guidelines. With our [RefTalks](#), [RefBites](#), [eBulletin](#), [Referral Guides](#) and much, much more, the site is the envy of most health boards here and further afield. Australia, Italy, America, Denmark - to name but a few of the countries where we are regularly viewed. We have presented to most Scottish health boards, Northern Ireland and four in England. Truly the 'Jewel in NHS Lothian's Crown'

So, as I sign off for the last time just think no more pressure (nice way to say nagging) of- 'have you reviewed your pages?'- 'have you signed off your pages?'- FOLLOW THE TEMPLATE- 'who has copyright?' and I am sure you will all remember lots more of my frequent comments.

Please all take care of yourselves, stay safe & stay healthy.

Heather.

[RefTalks](#) continues to be a success! A big thank you to all the Key speakers, attendees, and Referral Advisors for making this happen. Every year the feedback received from the post event surveys is analysed. The highlights of this year's annual report from Sep 2024 to June 2025 has been briefly summarised in the infographic below.



Upcoming Ref Talks

NHS Lothian

- General Surgery | Anne Ewing
Nov 26th, 2025 | 7:30-8:30pm
- Parkinsons Disease | Duncan W Gordon
Jan TBC, 2026 | 7:30-8:30pm
- SCRG Lothian Update | Lorna Porteous & RefHelp Team
Feb 24th, 2026 | 7:30-8:30pm
- Palliative Care | Tony Duffy & Juliet Spiller
March 31st, 2026 | 7:30-8:30pm
- Functional Neurological Disorder | Michael McLean
Apr 28th, 2026 | 7:30-8:30pm

JOIN US, SEE YOU AT THE WEBINAR!

Contributors to this issue were:

Dr Becky Cheesbrough, Dr Catriona Morton, Dr Jane Burnett, Dr Mohammad Alshaikly, Dr David R Millar & Aparna Amanna. Thank you to all who have supported the development content for the RefHelp website.

Was this useful and interesting? We would love to hear your feedback or suggestions for future updates and content! Email us at: loth.refhelp@nhs.scot or even send us a tweet/X