

# Learning from ESP Podiatry Referral Outcomes within Foot and Ankle Pathways

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## Background:

This audit explored referral outcomes from ESP podiatrists, identifying learning related to clinical decision-making, pathway function and service pressures within contemporary NHS workforce models.

## Methods:

A retrospective audit reviewed adult ESP podiatry referrals to orthopaedic foot and ankle surgeons (May–December 2024).

Trauma cases were excluded. Outcomes were categorised and surgical conversion rates were calculated for cases with a confirmed consultant decision.

## Results:

70 referrals were identified

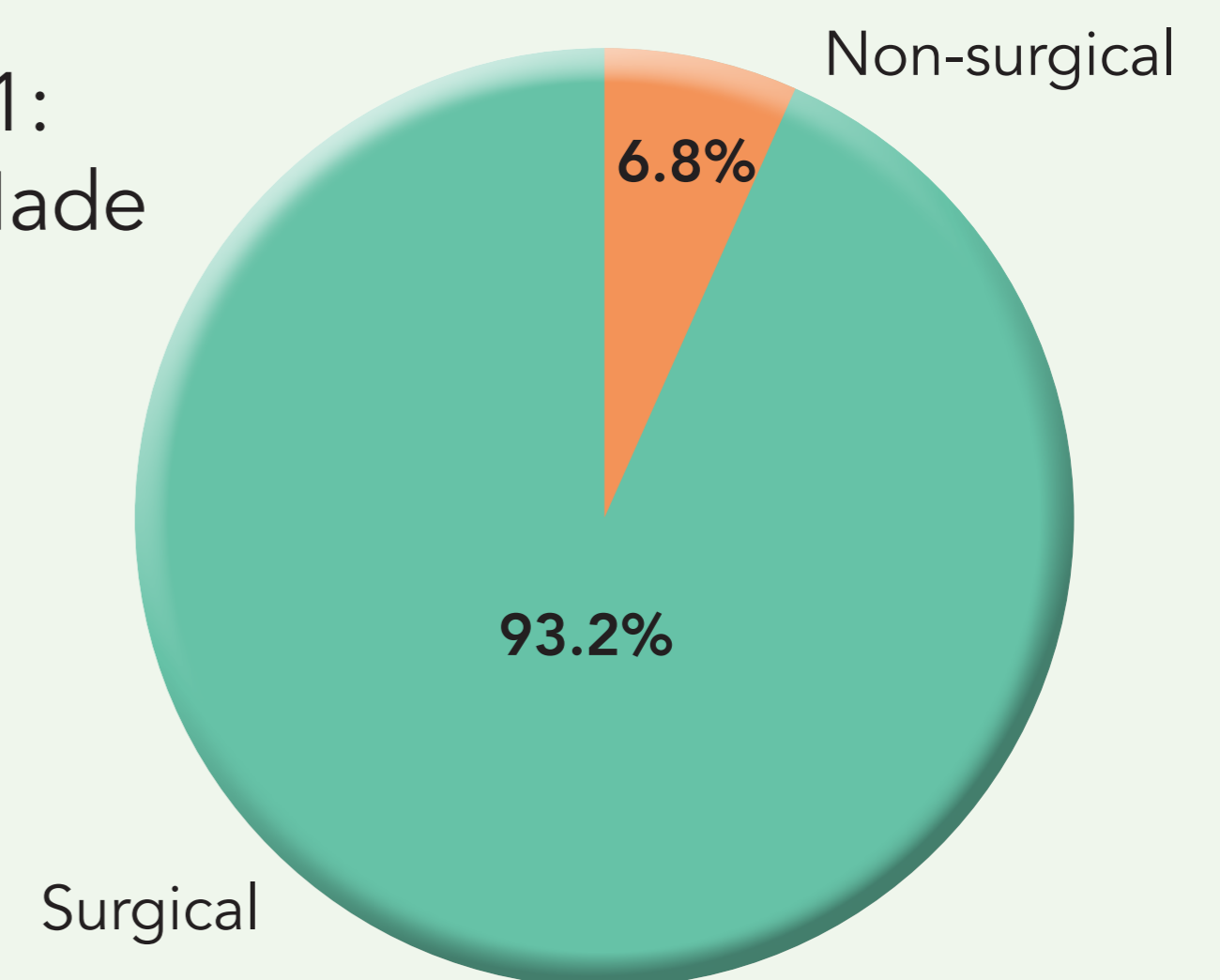
### Subgroup 1: Decision Made

- 44 patients had received a consultant decision
- 41 patients proceeded to surgery
- 3 patients were managed non-surgically
- surgical conversion rate of 93.2%

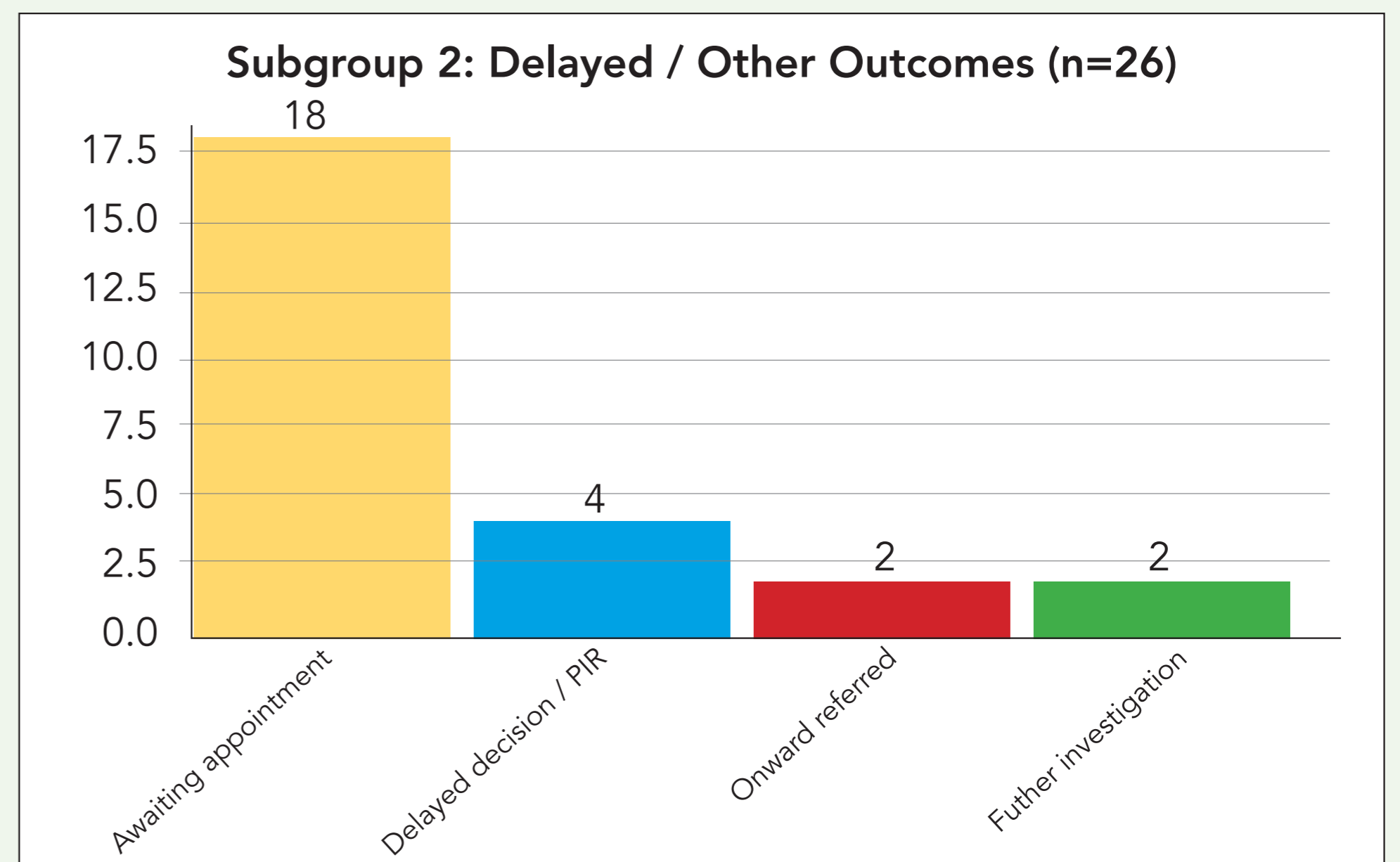
### Subgroup 2: Delayed / Other Outcomes

- 18 patients (25.7%) awaiting consultant appointment
- 4 patients with delayed decision / PIR
- 2 onward referrals
- 2 cases requiring further investigation

Subgroup 1:  
Decision Made  
(n=44)



Subgroup 2: Delayed / Other Outcomes (n=26)



## Key Learning:

**Clinical decision-making:** High surgical conversion rates suggest that ESP podiatrists are identifying appropriate surgical candidates within the pathway.

**Service capacity:** A significant proportion of patients were awaiting initial consultant review at the audit cut-off, indicating pressures within surgical clinic capacity.

**Waiting times:** Patients listed for surgery experienced prolonged and variable waits, with potential implications for patient experience and outcomes (Median waiting time for surgery: ~40 weeks).

**Communication and feedback:** Consultant correspondence frequently excluded the referring ESP clinician (92.6% of cases lacking direct feedback) limiting opportunities for feedback and shared learning across professional groups.

## Improvement Opportunities:

- Strengthening feedback mechanisms between orthopaedic surgeons and ESP podiatrists.
- Exploring approaches to improve access to surgical assessment clinics.
- Supporting patient education and realistic expectations.
- Embedding outcome monitoring and audit within ongoing service improvement activity.
- Supporting interprofessional learning across MSK foot and ankle services.