Background
Hospitals have seen a 37% increase in acute admissions over the last decade\(^1\); clearly not sustainable in times of austerity. With an expanding ageing population, the demand for acute medical services is proposed to increase exponentially. In an attempt to stop this trend, Salford Royal introduced a Consultant Acute Physician Triage bleep.

Aim
To evaluate the impact of introducing a Consultant-led referral team within our Acute Medical Unit.

Methods
Working with our Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), a re-ablement bid was granted to fund three new Acute Physician posts for 18 months to facilitate this project. The service became fully operational in September 2012.

A dedicated Acute Physician takes all Primary Care & Emergency Department referrals, Monday-Friday 8:30am–7:00pm and weekends 12:00–8:00pm.

The Consultant either accepts the referral or deflects the patient, either by offering clinical advice or mobilising appropriate outpatient services.

Data for telephone encounters has been collected using a paper proforma (September 2012 – June 2013). Feedback has been sought via the Clinical Commissioning Group.

Results
- 1203 of 6122 acute medical referrals were either deflected or managed in under 12 hours of initial referral (19.7%).
- 626 patients (10.23%) were deflected by the receiving physician
- 577 patients (9.43%) were assessed, treated and discharged within 12 hours of admission
- No demonstrable adverse impact has been noted with regards to readmissions rates (Figure 2).

Conclusion
A Consultant referral bleep allows for 1 in 5 patient referrals to be managed without admission or with a less than 12 hour stay. Ten percent of referrals to acute medicine may not require admission. This is likely achieved by giving phone advice in conjunction with broadening other practitioners’ knowledge of fast-track services and utilising ambulatory care pathways. Working with the CCG is a creative way of funding Acute Physician expansion and positive feedback has been received from the CCG.

\(^1\) Hospitals on The Edge? The Time for Action; A Report by The Royal College of Physicians, September 2012