CIVICA

Delivering improved healthcare across the North West of England

Good healthcare is all about providing the right treatment at the right time in the right place. To help its front-line staff achieve this, North West Ambulance Service NHS Trust has commissioned an innovative system that provides ambulance crews with up-to-date patient information and enables seamless referrals to other care providers.

The North West Ambulance Service NHS Trust (NWAS) is the second largest ambulance trust in England, covering an area stretching more than 150 miles from Cheshire right up to the border with Scotland. It's home to seven million people, and includes the major population centres of Greater Manchester, Liverpool, Blackpool and Preston, as well as some of the UK's most sparsely populated countryside. The trust handles over a million 999 calls per year, and operates around 550 ambulances from its 109 ambulance stations.

Everything the Trust does is geared towards improving patient care by delivering the right treatment for person's circumstances. Not every patient who calls for an ambulance needs to be taken to hospital, for example: for some, remaining at home with appropriate care is a better choice for their wellbeing and will speed up recovery.

For others, the best option is referral to another care provider, which may be as part of an agreed care pathway.

Knowing what the most appropriate care would be – and being able to make referrals quickly, efficiently and securely – is critical to front-line staff. The Trust is therefore working hard to equip them with the right tools and information to complement their professional experience, to enable them to administer the right care in the right place at the right time.

Benefits

- 300 GP surgeries signed up

- Over 3,000 registered users

- Reduction in A&E attendances and admissions

- Recognised by healthcare professionals nationally, making the shortlist at the E-Health Insider Awards and crowned winner at both the Health Business Awards and Informatics Skills Development Network Awards.

Key outcomes:

80%
reduction time in patient referral to alternate NHS department or care provider

7,000
alert notifications logged in ERISS

21,500
referrals handled

ERISS has been an excellent product ahead of its time, allowing special patient information to be shared electronically with those providing emergency care at scene and also an electronic referral means for those with not so urgent problems."

Sam English, Chief Clinical Information Officer

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Introducing ERISS

One part of this programme is a new system called ERISS – the Electronic Referral and Information Sharing System. ERISS serves two important functions. Firstly, it provides ambulance crews with important information about patients at the address they're on their way to, thereby enabling them to make a more informed decision about what care to provide. Second, when a crew decides not to take a patient to hospital, but to refer them to another part of the NHS or a care provider, they can use ERISS to make the referral electronically.

The right care

ERISS helps ambulance crews to administer the right care when they're attending a patient's home. If the patient has a condition, such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), or is on a 'care pathway', their GP can set up a 'flag' in ERISS with relevant notes attached to it.

This flag is received by the ambulance service's control centre, which puts an alert on the person's address in the ambulance dispatch system. If and when a crew is sent to that address, their in-cab computer will tell them there's a flag against the property they're on their way to.

They can then phone the control centre, whose staff will supply the crew with the information about the patient. This means that as soon as the crew arrives at the house, they're aware of any known conditions, preferences, care pathways or a 'message in a bottle' with instructions in the fridge, for example.

Knowing this information means they can make a better judgement on what care to administer in the home, whether the person should be taken to A&E, or whether to refer them to another care provider.

This capability has already contributed to a drop in the number of patients attending or being admitted to A&E, thereby saving GP surgeries across the North West £140 per attendanceand over £1,700 per admission of one of their patients. More importantly, this drop in A&E usage means that patients are getting the right care first time.

Another benefit of using ERISS to create these 'flags' is that the system periodically emails the doctor or clinician who created the flag for an address, to make sure it's still required. This helps avoid situations where a flag is never removed, even after a person has moved home or passed away. Again, this is an important way in which ERISS enables better patient care through improved information governance and management.

Watertight referrals

Previously, making a referral would take around 15 minutes, with a member of staff in the control centre emailing or faxing details through to the appropriate care provider.

Using ERISS, this time has been cut to around three minutes – a reduction of 80% – because the process is entirely electronic, which makes it much easier for the support centre staff handling the referrals.

As well as referrals being faster, they're more secure and reliable than ever before, and ERISS ensures each one is sent to the right provider. Electronic referrals are also important for audit and governance purposes, because they give NWAS a detailed and comprehensive view of all the data. This means the organisation can monitor referral rates, enabling it to assess the safety and effectiveness of care pathways and make more informed decisions about future care requirements.

Secure and easily accessible

ERISS has been carefully designed by Civica, a systems integrator specialising in Enterprise Information Management and secure IT services. Importantly, the high levels of data security do not come at the cost of usability: ERISS is easy to access, both from within NHS networks and via the internet. This means that non- NHS organisations that form an important part of care provision, such as hospices and social services, can access the system, thereby creating an integrated care environment.

Real benefits, right now

Following successful trials, ERISS was officially launched in early 2014 and, a year after launch, had seen a big uptake. 514 healthcare organisations have already signed up, including more than 300 of the region's GP surgeries. Within these organisations, there are over 3,000 registered users.

> Civica have worked well with NWAS over the years with few complaints or issues. They continue to provide excellent service, a timely and cost-effective response and demonstrate a willingness to partner NWAS in further digital integration of the system."
>
> **Sam English,** Chief Clinical Information Officer

These healthcare professionals have used ERISS to set up 7,000 alert notifications, and ambulance crews have logged more than 21,500 referrals through the system. Behind the numbers are, of course, stories of how the system has tangibly improved people's lives. Sam English, Chief Clinical Information Officer at NWAS reveals that it has made a real difference to patients across the region.

He says: "ERISS has been an excellent product ahead of its time, allowing special patient information to be shared electronically with those providing emergency care at scene and also an electronic referral means for those with not so urgent problems."

Multi-award-winning

As well as winning the 'Patient Data Award' at the Health Business Awards, ERISS picked up 'Innovation of the year' at the Informatics Skills Development Network Awards, and was shortlisted for 'Best use of IT to support integrated healthcare services' at the E-Health Insider Awards.

Learn more: **civica.com**

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