

Strategic solution

Diadem Medical Practice describes how a new system works for them.



● Diadem Medical Practice is at Bilton Grange Health Centre.

Friday 13 might not be the best day in many people's calendars, but it has certainly worked out well for practice manager, Sue Thompson.

It was on this day in January 2006 that her practice made the highly successful move to its current clinical system, SystmOne and then on Friday, November 13, 2009, her practice moved premises without losing computer access.

'I was born just after midnight on Saturday 14, so Friday 13 has always been close to my heart. I've always found it a most auspicious day,' says Sue, practice manager at Diadem Medical Practice in Hull.

The Greenwich Avenue Surgery (now the Diadem Medical Practice)

was one of the earlier practices to move to SystmOne, CSC's strategic primary care solution. That means it was near the head of a growing pack. In November last year, CSC announced a major milestone, when the 1,000th practice went live with the electronic health records system. The Broadhurst Street Medical Practice in Leicester is just beginning to realise the benefits of the system, which is available under the Local Service Provider contract to GP practices across the north, east and midlands of England. The system allows GPs to share clinical information around a single electronic

The system allows GPs to share clinical information around a single electronic patient record in a consistent and managed way.

patient record in a consistent and managed way, making it easier to work and improving care.

Under SystmOne, GPs and clinical staff can access the patient record, containing the full medical history at the touch of a button, and the information can also be shared with other clinical teams, such as child health and community staff.

If Sue Thompson's experience is anything to go by, the Leicester practice will

have no regrets.

'We moved to SystmOne because we felt it would help us move forward. We like to think we're an innovative



● Sue Thompson, practice manager.

practice – we've been using computers since 1992 – and, with the National Programme for IT coming in, we thought that SystmOne would be the best way for us to future-proof our IT and keep up with developments in the NPfIT programme,' she said.

The Hull practice has five full-time GP partners, two part-time salaried GPs, three practice nurses and a health care assistant, as well as an administration and ancillary staff of 13. It is an urban, teaching practice with around 10,200 patients in an area of some deprivation. It migrated to SystmOne after attending a demonstration run by the local PCT.

'We could really see the potential. We chose it because of its looks and its usability and felt it would meet our needs. For example, we were piloting Choose and Book and liked the fact that SystmOne would integrate it into the clinical system.'

As practice manager, Sue Thompson believes that the system helps in her work.

'The staff like it, and that's very important. Yes, it saves staff time, but it's not just about the bottom line; it's also about job satisfaction and the system definitely makes their jobs easier. The patients like it too, which is also important.'

In practical terms, the system is effective at recording data for QOF.

'Obviously we provide high quality care, and the system helps us to prove it. There are all sorts of valuable features – for example, it sends off our flu figures

automatically which saves me a job!'

She is particularly impressed by the appointments system, and as it is Windows-based she believes it is easier to use because so many people are already familiar with Windows. All routine appointments are available to be booked directly by patients online, saving the need for a potentially time-consuming phone call.

'The patients love it. They can use the system to contact us – and they certainly do – and can book their own appointments and order repeat prescriptions. They can also add a note if they want advice about something, for example travel advice, and this is sent to the GP or practice nurse attached to the patient's notes, so that they have all the information to hand.'

Because so much clinical information is integral to the patient record – for example, the practice ECG machine is now integrated, so that a high quality image is saved directly into the patient's record - it also aids communication, between GPs and

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other members of the primary health care team, but also with secondary care.

Referral letters, for example, are sent with test results attached and blood tests are also ordered and results made available via the system. Although their local out-of-hours service is not yet using SystmOne, reports are received directly into the practice's system. A&E doctors at the hospital also have access, with the patient's permission, to a read-only version of their record. The link with system's community, used by staff such as district nurses, ensures that the practice knows when a district nurse has visited and the outcome of the visit.

Although around 120 miles separates the practices in Hull and Leicester, implementation of SystmOne in the latter may well have an impact on the former.

'The more practices using the system, the better for everyone,' says Sue Thompson.

'It means that when our patients are on holiday and need to see a GP, if they go to a local practice which uses SystmOne, we can share our patient's record with them, so that they have all the information they need and can enter their own data into the record. It also makes it much easier if a patient changes practice, because the electronic record is transferred immediately. Of course the paper record will follow and may take rather more time.'

Certainly, senior management in the East Midlands is excited by it. Dr Simon Freeman, director of information and corporate performance for NHS Leicester City and NHS Leicestershire County and Rutland, believes it will save time and resources.

'This is a great example of how technology can provide better, safer and more effective care for patients. It will ensure people have to tell their story just once, and support healthcare professionals by storing all relevant information on a patient safely and securely,' he said.

Sue Thompson also values the fact that the system is fully hosted, which frees the practice from the responsibility of backing up data, and also provides built-in IT support and upgrades.

Remote access to the complete live system allows 24-hour access to patient records via a VPN or 3G mobile connection using a laptop.

'Even if the practice burns down, as long as we can get to a laptop, we're okay,' she says.

What's more, she enjoys using it. 'I'm a very hands-on manager and, in any case, I believe you should be able to use the system so that you can support your staff. I use it quite extensively and am really satisfied with the results delivered.'

The value of SystmOne was underlined by the recent move to new premises, she says, which involved setting up some 30 PCs.

'There were no problems at all – it all went smoothly – just as we expected it would,' she said. ■