

In Focus



St Catherine's Hospice goes paperless, improves care and increases patient choice

St Catherine's Hospice can provide a more integrated, holistic care service and offer patients more choice thanks to Advanced Health & Care's Crosscare.

At **St Catherine's Hospice, Crawley**, the vision has always been to help patients approach the end of their lives 'informed, supported and free of pain'. The hospice is continuing this vision and, in line with the national strategy, is expanding its community services so that, if they wish, patients can choose to spend their last days in the comfort of their own home.

St Catherine's dedicated team cares for patients in a variety of environments, including a day hospice and two in-patient wards, which can accommodate up to 18 patients. Over 70% of St Catherine's patients are cared for at home, but the hospice is expanding its community care provision to provide a seven day palliative care service, allowing even more patients to stay at home, and providing more support for families and carers.

In 2006, prompted by a desire to improve reporting and auditability, St Catherine's replaced its paper-based patient records with Crosscare and since then has been able to increase its caseload by around 30%, with

just a fifth more nursing staff. The move to a paperless system has enabled St Catherine's to provide more flexible and integrated care.

"Part of the new system means that community teams now take laptops out with them when they are visiting patients, so they have up-to-date patient data and can record patient information." says Jane O'Donnell, Nurse Specialist for day hospice and outpatients, and one of the clinical leads for the implementation.

"I'm often in the situation where I have to take calls for my colleagues who aren't around, and with a paperless system and up to date information, it's easy for me to do and puts me in a better position to give the patient confidence," she continues.

The Crosscare implementation project was led by a steering group of managers from a variety of disciplines, with support from IT literate and enthusiastic 'super users' who could share time and expertise with less confident colleagues. The success of the implementation was due largely to the dedication and enthusiasm of this

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team. Jane and her fellow clinical lead Patricia Brayden, a specialist consultant in palliative care, spent many hours summarising and uploading over 270 sets of notes, as well as tailoring the system to meet St Catherine's exact needs.

They were aided by Crosscare's adaptability. Although the system comes with a number of set modules – including hospice specific modules such as one supporting lymphoedema clinics - they can be configured to fit the individual needs of each organisation.

The team at St Catherine's had already invested time and effort in optimising their paper notes, and wanted to ensure they would be able to replicate and improve on this system. "We're still responding to clinical suggestions," says Jane.

Record keeping, reporting and auditability have also been improved. "Logging visits and activity onto patient databases was previously an onerous activity," says Jane, "We had highly qualified nurses tapping in numbers with no gain for patient care but with Crosscare it's integrated, so when you fill in your notes, it's automatically logging your figures at the same time. We get a much more accurate picture and it's not a task staff end up with at the end of the week."

"Extracting data and reports is also much simpler – information for MDS submissions can now be gathered in hours by one person." She continues. The breadth of reports also

has benefits for day to day working, as Jane explains: "We run reports on out of hours calls, which enables each team member to see at a glance if a patient has called in and they can promptly follow up with a call to the patient. We also run reports which identify how frequently we have discussed preferred place of death with a patient, which makes easier for staff and helps provide a more efficient service."

There are administrative as well as clinical advantages of a paperless system. Sally Hill, Co-coordinator of clinical administration systems, has worked hard to ensure St Catherine's is getting every possible benefit from Crosscare. For example, she has developed an array of mail merge documents which extract data from the system, allowing staff to produce common letters and forms easily and accurately.

Starting with the notice of death form which must be sent to the Healthcare Commission, Sally has developed templates for discharge letters, letters to GPs with case review meeting updates and minutes of MDT meetings. As well as saving time, creating these files on the system means they are automatically and indelibly stored.

As St Catherine's continues to optimise its paperless environment with the help of Crosscare's flexible system, staff will be freed-up to care for patients and allow them to live as fully as possible as they approach end of life in whichever setting they chose.

For more information

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