

Tribal Technology works with Mid Yorkshire Hospitals NHS Trust to provide an IT solution for the management and tracking of their patient case notes.

Background

Since the merging of Dewsbury District Hospital and the Pinderfields and Pontefract Hospitals NHS Trust to form the Mid Yorkshire Hospitals NHS Trust, the number of patient case note files stored in paper record libraries at various locations has increased to more than 800,000.

Problems of manual misfiling were frustrating and time consuming for staff who often had to search through endless rows of records or make several phone calls to different sites to locate missing notes. Some patients arrived for clinics without the necessary documentation being readily available, which meant hospital staff had to create temporary case notes to keep records up to date until the original files were found.

The storage system in each library, which allocated a range of numbers to individual shelves, also limited capacity. If files expanded, they had to move to overflow shelves elsewhere in the library, creating confusion and hindering efficiency.



The requirement

The Trust needed to bring all its patient case notes together on one central site managed by a smaller team of specialist staff, enabling the records facility to move to a 24/7 operation. Automating storage would reduce human error and allow files to be stored randomly, increasing capacity. The Trust merger and subsequent reconfiguration of services also highlighted that patients already attended multiple hospital sites, exacerbating the need to quickly track and locate files over a wide geographical area.

The solution

Working closely with the Trust, Tribal Technology provided an IT solution for an off-site medical records library in a central location close to the local motorway network, which provides Trust-wide tracking of case notes across the hospital sites. The Trust's Patient Administration System (PAS) is interfaced to a database housed on the Trust's network. Precision is assured by seamless integration with the PAS database - vital in an environment where there is a demand for high speed, high accuracy data transfer. Patients are referenced by a unique number which, along with a bar code, is replicated on the patient's case note volumes ensuring that the system can locate files, however randomly they are stored in the library.

As outpatient appointments are made on the PAS, the system generates requests for patient case notes required for forthcoming out-patient clinics. Ad-hoc and urgent requests, for example from a consultant's secretary or the A&E department, can also be placed 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Library staff are then able to download information on all requests to hand-held terminals. The system organises the worklist to create the shortest route through the library, reducing the time it takes to pick files. As case notes are picked, they are scanned and taken in trolleys to the despatch point for transfer to the appropriate clinic. The scanned data is uploaded to the database so that, at any given time, users can trace and intercept individual case notes between on-site destinations, a particularly important feature for the Coronary Care and Medical Assessment Units.

The Trust merger has increased both the number of hospital sites and the size of the geographical responsibility. Tribal Technology continues to work with the Trust to create a series of satellite libraries that can handle 'active' patient case notes locally, returning them to the central library once treatment is complete.

Achievements

- The solution has been successfully installed in a central records library connected to the Patient Administration System (PAS) at four main hospital sites
- Random filing has substantially increased storage capacity
- Minimising human error has improved efficiency in pinpointing the exact location of files across all hospital sites, enabling the Trust to meet its targets of supplying patients case notes to hospital departments within specified timescales
- Requiring a smaller staff team, the records library is now open 24 hours a day, seven days a week instead of the previous 8am to 6pm service

"The team at Tribal Technology understands the issues surrounding tracking and has worked very closely with us throughout the project. The company also has a good understanding of our field of work and is astute enough to keep abreast of developments within the NHS. It's very refreshing to be able to have detailed ongoing dialogue and further develop the system as our requirements evolve, rather than continuously having to go back to the beginning to explain our needs."

Andy Weissenborn, IM&T project manager, Mid Yorkshire Hospitals NHS Trust

Key facts

Client profile	The Mid Yorkshire Hospitals NHS Trust is responsible for running Dewsbury, Pinderfields and Pontefract hospitals, plus a number of smaller satellite sites.
Site installations	Central off-site records library at Whitwood, Castleford connected to the PAS at four main hospital sites to give a Trust-wide solution.
Number of users	The solution currently handles 450,000 patient case notes but will be expanded to cover 800,000 patient files.

Tribal Technology, the IT and information management division of Tribal Group plc, specialises in creative information management and business support solutions for education, local and central government, health and social care, and the private sector.

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