

Digital monitoring for COPD patients saves money and improves patient care



Background

East Lancashire Hospital NHS Trust (ELHT) is an integrated health care provider operating across five hospital sites and various community locations. It treats more than 600,000 patients a year, from the most serious emergencies to planned operations and procedures.

Over a twenty month period, East Lancashire Hospital NHS Trust and Inhealthcare worked in partnership in a trial of digital health services for patients suffering from COPD. The scheme involved a team of nurses based in a virtual ward in Burnley and Inhealthcare's digital health technology to remotely assess the health of patients from their own homes. ELHT chose to work with Inhealthcare to determine whether introducing digital health services could enable high quality care whilst reducing both costs and pressures on staff.

The solution

Using digital monitoring patients suffering from COPD test their own blood oxygen levels, blood pressure and temperature from home at a pre agreed time each day. The process involves the use of a landline or a mobile and a home device to take readings. Using automated telephone technology, the patient records their readings which are then sent to the virtual ward. A clinician within the virtual ward is alerted if a patient reading falls outside of the predetermined threshold range or if the patient fails to submit.

This new process ensures any irregularities in a patient's health are identified early on.

Key aims of the project

- To make patient care more proactive
- To increase the caseload capacity of the nursing team
- To improve the overall well-being of patients and their carers
- To reduce hospital admissions

Results

38%

reduction in admissions

Reduced patient admissions and length of stay

Patient admissions reduced by 37.8 percent, and bed days decreased by 33.8 percent. Being able to determine changes in a patient's health quickly means nurses are able to step in early and advise on changes of treatment. The reduction in the length of stay in hospital indicated that getting patients into hospital and giving them the appropriate care early, enabled them to return home much sooner.

818

less home visits required

Reduced home visits

Home visits reduced by 818, increasing the nurse's caseload capacity, enabling them to concentrate on the patients that needed immediate care.

£125,908

cost reduction

Cost savings

As a result of improved patient health, EHLT was able to make considerable financial savings. The reduction in hospital visits led to a total saving of £57,582. Additionally, a 52.5 percent fall in home visits led to a further saving of £68,326.

“Everything is easy to use and it gives you the support you need when you're not feeling well. It really puts my mind at ease.”

Patient from East Lancashire Hospitals NHS Trust

*The data from the project was collected over a twelve month period evaluating the results of 103 patients who received care from the digital service, against a control group of roughly the same size using a more traditional service.

Patient satisfaction

Patient feedback revealed the service was well received by patients. The specialist nursing team noticed that patient empowerment was boosted with patients taking a more proactive involvement in their own health. Patients also said they felt less anxious as they were able to monitor their conditions, safe in the knowledge that any fluctuations in readings would be recorded and acted upon by the team.

Conclusion

Overall the trial strongly demonstrated that for ELHT, digital health provides the means of facilitating a more efficient and proactive service with positive patient outcomes.

Hospital admissions and length of hospital stay were significantly reduced, meaning unnecessary costs were avoided and staff capacity could be better allocated.

Inhealthcare's trial also showed considerable scope for expansion of more telehealth services and the EHLT has recommended developing a similar strategy for patients suffering from other long term conditions.

About Inhealthcare

Inhealthcare is a UK digital health specialist working with the NHS to digitise care. Inhealthcare's national digital health platform supports remote monitoring for the UK population. Importantly, its services are highly secure, cost effective and studies show consistent improved clinical outcomes.

Please get in touch with a member of our team to discuss our digital COPD service in more detail.

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