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Glucose.....36 mg/dL

Hemoglobin.....3 mg/dL

Hematocrit.....23

CO₂.....3.1 mg/dL

pH.....7.3

Bilirubin.....17 mg/dL

Potassium.....3.1 mg/dL

Sodium.....122 mmol/L

Glucose.....36 mg/dL

Calcium.....7.5 mg/dL

Hemoglobin.....3 mg/dL

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CASE STUDY

> An Electronic Requesting World

By David Allcock

West Suffolk Hospital is picking up the pace in the high-stakes electronic data race as it implements an order communications system for users of its diagnostic services. The system will make requesting easier for general practitioners, improve pathology laboratory efficiency, reduce the number of duplicate tests and comply with national tracking policies. As an added bonus, the system allows doctors to supply electronic diagrams with their requests.

Hospital Initiative

West Suffolk Hospital is a busy, 460-bed hospital near Bury St. Edmunds, UK. Serving a 600 square mile area of about 275,000 people, the hospital has seen significant expansion.

The hospital initially thought the system would be supplied by the National Health Service (NHS) National Programme for IT. This was a UK Department of Health initiative to move the NHS toward a single, centrally mandated electronic healthcare record. However, the initiative has had well-publicized difficulties.

According to Mark McNally, West Suffolk Hospital's project manager, "There was an underestimation of the complexity of hospital environments, and several years of delay in achieving that goal has resulted. This left a vacuum for us in meeting the needs of our local healthcare community, and we found we had to go out into the marketplace to find the systems we need."

One core system needed was electronic requesting (order communications). West Suffolk Hospital had various goals for its system, such as achieving efficiency in the pathology laboratory. Secondly, they wanted to improve requesting quality by being able to stipulate the exact information needed from the doctor, ultimately reducing the ordering of duplicate tests.

The third goal was to reach out to general practitioners and make it easier for them to send in requests. Last, the system had to meet the requirements of National Patient Safety Agency (NPSA) Directive 16, which stipulates radiology test requesters read and take action on any tests requested.

Selecting a System

West Suffolk Hospital received approval for purchasing a third-party order communications system and began the procurement process in autumn 2009. "We were very conscious of the need to leverage supplier experience and looked for a market leader that would allow us to catch up quickly with the best systems out there," says McNally.

The evaluation team considered all leading order communications system products and selected Sunquest Integrated Clinical Environment™ (ICE™), a suite of web-based services delivering a

West Suffolk Hospital is a 460-bed hospital near Bury St. Edmunds, UK.



WEST SUFFOLK HOSPITAL

comprehensive range of software applications for use in primary and secondary care NHS Trusts.

West Suffolk Hospital is implementing ICE™ Requesting & Reporting, a web-based order communications system that allows requests from wards, clinics and GP surgeries, for all pathology, radiology and cardiology tests. The application lets requesters use mobile technologies such as tablet PCs and PDAs to capture the sample collection date and time at the bedside.

"We saw the Sunquest system as more strategic than others, giving us more opportunities to integrate with other data systems in the future," says McNally, noting that the team visited several hospitals to see the systems in use.

Case in point was the OpenNet module, which allows two hospitals running ICE to view a consolidated patient record showing all test results for a patient simultaneously. This sharing provided potential for collaborative patient care.

Forward Leap

Project implementation began in February 2010. Servers and software are installed, training is under way and three teams are working on test configurations. Currently, the hospital is determining how to incorporate mobile devices into the order communications system. Each ward lacks the room to add desktop PCs, so they established a wireless network and are selecting the best mix of devices, including computers on wheels, tablet PCs, and PDAs.

"Sunquest has been responsive during the implementation of the system," says McNally. "We had a specific request from our radiology department for doctors to be able to annotate line diagrams when placing orders for breast exams. Sunquest agreed to develop that functionality for us and we have been pleased to contribute to the design."

So far, the system has helped the hospital meet its original goals. For example, the pathology lab is improving efficiency by reducing the paper needed to report results.

In addition, the system allows for easy tracking of NPSA Directive 16 results. It supplies a complete audit trail, showing when the clinician looked at and actioned results.

The implementation phase of the Sunquest ICE solution is nearly complete. The team will begin by piloting the system in several main GP surgeries before moving onto full implementation. ■

David Allcock is vice president and general manager of International Operations, Sunquest Information Systems.