



The monthly hospital update for general practitioners

GP Bulletin

VitalPAC system is coming to DCH



Patients at Dorset County Hospital are set to benefit from a new hi-tech system which monitors their condition and immediately alerts their doctor if they are getting sicker.

Installation of the VitalPAC system will start over the next few months with the aim of having it up and running throughout the hospital by the autumn.

The system will enable nurses to record patients' vital signs electronically into handheld computers at the bedside rather

than using a paper chart to record data such as pulse, temperature and blood pressure.

VitalPAC then automatically analyses this information, along with data such as blood test results stored in other hospital databases, and identifies priority patients using an early warning score. An urgent alert is given if the score reveals the patient to be in need of immediate medical attention.

Once the data has been recorded it can be assessed by any clinician from anywhere in the hospital.

Dr Andrew Ball, DCH's Clinical Director for Critical Care Services, said: "This system will ensure we identify deteriorating patients quickly throughout the hospital".

"It electronically allows patient observations to be inputted at the bedside. It then calculates an alert score and prompts the nurse as to the appropriate action to take. This means that concerns are escalated promptly and appropriately to the correct staff.

"The information can be accessed anywhere within the hospital so we will always know where the sickest patients are. It means we can pick up deteriorating patients earlier and ensure they receive appropriate treatment.

"It is a very user friendly system and is well-liked by staff in hospitals where it is already in use, so the implementation should be straightforward. We hope to have it up and running throughout the hospital by the autumn."

The system, designed by healthcare improvement specialist The Learning Clinic, will bring efficiency savings as well as benefits for patient safety. Time-consuming paper-based systems will be phased out and bed management will be improved as VitalPAC allows staff to quickly and easily see which patients are due to arrive in hospital and which are ready to go home.



It is also expected that the system will increase the accuracy of patient assessment. Studies have shown that with VitalPAC there are three times fewer errors in patient risk assessment than with traditional pen and paper methods.

Chris Milliner, The Learning Clinic's site manager for Dorset County Hospital, said: "When patients come into hospital, they want to know that they are always going to be monitored closely, fully and accurately. They want to know that if they get sicker, the change is going to be immediately identified and they are going to be quickly reviewed and treated by their doctor or a specialist. VitalPAC helps do all of that. It also means doctors and nurses spend less time filling in paperwork and more time with their patients. Quite simply, it improves patient care."

Pictured above, left to right, are Matron for Critical Care and Surgery Miles Tompkins, Clinical Director for Critical Care Services Dr Andrew Ball and Critical Care Consultant Nurse Sharon Mooney demonstrate the VitalPAC system to patient Walter Court. The second photo shows an example screenshot on a VitalPAC handheld computer.

New VTE prescribing policy in orthopaedic patients

In line with recent Department of Health Guidelines, we have modified our VTE (venous thromboembolism) Prophylactic Policy in the Orthopaedic Department.

All patients undergoing hip or knee replacement surgery will be discharged on subcutaneous Clexane.

All knee patients will receive a total of ten days subcutaneous Clexane.

Hip replacement and hip revision patients, four weeks of subcutaneous Clexane.

Unless indicated the dose will be 40mg once a day.

We will provide patients with the full course and will advise them on needle collection and disposal.

In order to screen for Heparin Induced Thrombocytopenia (HIT), please ensure your patients have a full blood count check at around day seven post op. Should platelets count fall by more than 50% compared to pre op platelet count, please contact the Department of Haematology for advice on 01305 254361.

Thank you for your help with this new Policy. Please direct any queries or concerns to Peter Ward, Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon/VTE Committee Chairman, peter.ward@dchft.nhs.uk , 01305 255515.

Pathology service GP survey

The Department of Pathology, providing Clinical Chemistry, Haematology and Transfusion Laboratory, Histopathology and Microbiology services at Dorset County Hospital aim to provide a high quality pathology service to the hospital and our community colleagues.

We would be most grateful if you could take a few minutes to fill out the survey at the end of this newsletter and let us know how you think we are doing. By using your feedback we can help improve our service to you. Please put an X in the box by the most appropriate answer – you can email your survey back to shelley.harding@dchft.nhs.uk or send a hard copy to Shelley Harding, Administrator, Microbiology Office, Dorset County Hospital.

The closing date for the survey is 7 March 2011.

Fast-track referral guidance

Could we please remind you of the importance of clearly explaining to patients what to expect when they are referred under the two-week wait fast track process for suspected cancer.

Patients should be aware of the urgency of the referral and the need to be available to be seen within the next 14 days. Patients with breast symptoms where cancer is not suspected will also be seen within 14 days.

We have had regular instances of patients calling our appointments team querying why they have received an appointment so quickly, which leaves our staff in an awkward position when the patient clearly does not understand they have been referred with a suspected cancer.

The Dorset Cancer Network website provides all the cancer referral guidelines documents on its website here <http://www.dorsetcancernetwork.nhs.uk/referral.htm>

Helping patients to quit smoking



Members of the Ear, Nose and Throat team from DCH, with the help of with the Speech and Language Therapy and Maxillofacial teams, arranged a SmokeStop support event in the hospital restaurant last month. It was held in conjunction with the NHS Dorset SmokeStop service to help raise awareness of the risks of smoking in relation to a range of medical conditions.

Links with the SmokeStop service are being developed across the hospital to improve the support given to smokers when they come into hospital. 66% of

current smokers would like to give up and a hospital admission or consultation often acts as a prompt to initiate a quit attempt.

Further SmokeStop support events are planned at DCH with the next one being national No Smoking Day on 9 March 2011.

For further information or resources to help your patients please contact Claire Peak via e-mail Claire.Peak@dorset-pct.nhs.uk or 01305 361166.

DCH Charity launches appeal



Dorset County Hospital Charity has launched its 2011 appeal to the public.

They are asking everyone who has been treated at the hospital in the past three years to donate 'Just £1' to the appeal in February to help it raise half a million pounds to fund the purchase and installation of digital mammography equipment.

Hospital Governor, Wendy Nightingale, who has had breast cancer, volunteered to lead the appeal. She said: "News this month that breast cancer figures have been revised from one in nine to one in eight women is a sobering thought. One in four of these women will die from this disease. Three hundred men are diagnosed each year in the UK with breast cancer. The earlier the diagnosis, the greater the rate of survival.

"Digital mammography is a pressing need for our hospital. The need is now and I hope that with the help of our

community we can raise the money as soon as possible. We want the very best for our patients and to be able to safeguard this vital service in our hospital.

"By giving us *Just £1*, or the price of voting in X-Factor or Strictly Come Dancing, Dorset residents can make a huge difference."

The much needed equipment will take diagnostic imaging for breast cancer from film and chemicals to digital. The benefits for the hospital and patients are enormous: faster diagnosis, much more accurate detection and the ability to treat greater numbers - keeping DCHFT abreast with technological advancements in health care.

Superintendent Radiographer Sue Green added: "We currently have one X-ray device in the Breast Care Unit which is now 12 years old. It uses a film-based imaging process. This processing takes time and has now been superseded by far superior digital imaging which yields instant images and which radiographers are being trained to use.

"The old equipment was the best of its kind when we bought it but it is now outdated. It is getting harder to repair as some parts are no longer available. It is the same as your own washing machine: at some point it's just better to buy a new one."

With a national shortage of consultant radiologists with expertise in imaging and interpreting breast radiographs, the hospital needs to attract and retain the best consultants and to 'future-proof' this service at the hospital, and keep up with technological advancements. Currently information cannot be shared with regional centres of excellence, including the Poole-based Dorset Breast Screening Unit. Films have to be couriered between DCH and Poole, which costs money and delays diagnosis.

Wendy Nightingale is pictured with DCH Chief Executive Jean O'Callaghan at the launch of the appeal at Birkin House with raspberry cordial and cup cakes that were specially

made for the event and which are being sold by Dorset cake company Lulubelle's to raise money for the appeal.

For more information you can visit <http://www.boostdch.co.uk> or contact Fundraising Manager Stevie Pattison-Dick on 01305 255419 or stevie.pattison-dick@dchft.nhs.uk

GP Education

For information about forthcoming lectures you can visit the GP education website at http://www.dorsetgpcentre.com/dorset_gps/courses_and_events/dorchester_gp_education or contact Judy Crabb in the DCH Education Centre on 01305 255258 or judy.crabb@dchft.nhs.uk

For more information about Dorset County Hospital you can visit the GP section of our website here <http://www.dchft.nhs.uk/gp/gpindex.html>

If there is anything else you would like to see on our website, or in this newsletter, please contact Communications Manager Susie Palmer on susie.palmer@dchft.nhs.uk or 01305 254683
