

Patients given unprecedented access to x-rays, ultrasound and other imaging

Hospitals across England start to empower patients with imaging access online, following extension of a national network called the Image Exchange Portal – helping patients seeking second opinions or specialist treatment, armed forces personnel, and countless others.

A network that connects every NHS acute hospital in England is giving thousands of patients unprecedented and easy online access to everything from their x-rays through to ultrasound, CT and MRI scans, and a great deal more.

The Image Exchange Portal, or IEP, is relied on to share some 35-40 million images each week between NHS professionals in different trusts. Now, IEP with Anyone, an extension to the network, is spreading benefits directly to patients, allowing people throughout the country to quickly view their imaging through a secure log-in on their mobile phone, tablet or computer. Patients are also starting to share their own images with clinicians. The move is helping to end a costly and outdated reliance on CDs for the NHS, and is helping thousands of patients each month in different ways.

Annie Pinfold, a picture archiving and communication systems senior consultant at Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, said: “This makes a real difference to our patients who need their imaging for all sorts of reasons. We have helped hundreds of patients in the last few months alone, ranging from serving UK armed forces personnel deployed in different parts of the world, through to a patient travelling overseas for advanced chemotherapy treatment, and many more patients who need images quickly to go on holiday, to support claims, to get second opinions or specialist treatment, or simply because they want to see it.”

The trust has seen a surge in imaging requests from patients since the high profile General Data Protection Regulation came into place. Having access to IEP with Anyone, is helping to manage this growing demand, with two thirds of patients who do ask for their imaging from the trust now specifically requesting IEP with Anyone, rather than CDs.

“It is so much faster and easier for patients to receive and share images,” said Pinfold. “Many devices no longer have CD drives, and IEP with Anyone allows us to send images much more quickly through a secure electronic transfer trusted in the NHS, compared to the five days, or even longer, that it can take to post two encrypted CDs and a password in separate jiffy bags.”

Similarly to other hospitals using the network, the trust has been saving time and money – with each CD request from patients consuming up to 20 minutes of staff time, and nearly £9 in production and postage costs, compared to five minutes and pence through IEP with Anyone.

Jane Rendall, managing director for Sectra in the UK and Ireland, the company which manages the Image Exchange Portal for the NHS, said: “Physical media is going out of fashion. The NHS needs to provide information in a way that is accessible, fast, easy and secure. This extension to one of the most widely used networks in the NHS allows that and is already helping thousands of patients each month.

“IEP with Anyone is an important step in empowering patients, whilst helping to reduce the burden on NHS staff. Confidentiality can also be better protected, and patients can have more control around who sees their information. IEP with Anyone removes the risk of CDs being lost, whilst also providing patients with the means to easily forward imaging to chosen third parties, or trusted family and friends.

“But whilst more and more patients are starting to benefit, we want this piece of national infrastructure to help every patient that needs their imaging. We have been listening to NHS staff in

the way they use this technology to enhance it further, and an even easier to use version will be available to every hospital and their patients from February 2019.”

Patients are given access to IEP with Anyone by their hospital through a secure log-in. Their imaging remains in the portal for up to 60 days, depending on trust processes, during which time they can use forwarding features to easily share with trusted third parties, who can view dynamic image sets from a secure link.

The system means that images generated across the hospital can be easily and securely shared with patients – not just those captured in radiology. Images from cardiology, ophthalmology, or any diagnostic discipline that generates digital DICOM images, can be uploaded into the patient portal.

IEP with Anyone will be complemented by other improvements being made to the network for the NHS in 2019. The IEP will move from the NHS N3 network to the new Health and Social Care Network, managed by NHS Digital. A pilot scheme will also launch in the NHS during 2019, which is expected to remove a great deal of manual processes currently associated with sharing images between professionals, in order to significantly improve the efficiency and ease of imaging flow across trusts.

ENDS

Notes to editors

About Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (OUH) is one of the largest acute teaching trusts in the UK, with a national and international reputation for the excellence of its services and its role in patient care, teaching and research.

The Trust supports world-leading research programmes in cardiovascular diseases, musculoskeletal disorders, neurological disorders such as Parkinson’s and Alzheimer’s through its designation as one of the UK’s five comprehensive biomedical centres. It works in close partnership with the University of Oxford and is a leading centre for cancer, neurosciences, diabetes, genetics and many other fields. Research themes of particular strength are: cancer, cardiovascular science, diabetes, endocrinology and metabolism, infection and immunology, musculoskeletal science, neuroscience and reproduction and development.

This brings together academic research expertise with clinical teams to translate medical science into better healthcare treatments. Our patients benefit from world-class discovery and innovation supported by the NIHR Oxford Biomedical Research Centre, a partnership between the Trust and the University of Oxford, funded by the National Institute for Health Research.

The Trust employs over 12,000 staff and consists of four hospitals: the Churchill Hospital, John Radcliffe Hospital and Nuffield Orthopaedic Centre in Oxford and the Horton General Hospital in Banbury. On 1 October 2015 the Trust was awarded Foundation status and became Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust. www.ouh.nhs.uk

About Sectra

With more than 25 years of innovation and 1,800 installations, Sectra is a leading global provider of imaging IT solutions that support healthcare in achieving patient-centric care. Sectra offers an enterprise imaging solution comprising PACS for imaging-intense departments (radiology, pathology, cardiology, orthopaedics), VNA, and share and collaborate solutions. For numerous consecutive years, Sectra PACS has been awarded 'Best in KLAS' for highest customer satisfaction. sectra.com/medical