Leeds deploys imaging tech for advanced NHS regional digital pathology network

Leeds Teaching Hospitals becomes the first in a collaboration of NHS trusts to go live with the Sectra picture archiving and communication system, paving the way for one of the most sophisticated interconnected digital pathology initiatives in the world

A multi-million pound initiative that is digitising, connecting and applying artificial intelligence to NHS pathology services in the North of England has taken an important step, after Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust became the first of an initial six trusts in the Northern Pathology Imaging Co-operative (NPIC) to deploy a technology that will underpin the regional programme.

Leeds Teaching Hospitals went live with the Sectra picture archiving and communication system (PACS) in October – allowing pathology images to be interrogated by professionals electronically from a range of devices.

With many pathology departments across the country still reliant on microscopes and glass slides, the new system is allowing pathologists to work more quickly, gain easier access to opinions from colleagues and manage rising demand.

Bigger benefits are expected as more hospitals in the NPIC co-operative go live with the system later in the year and into 2021. The programme is part of a £17m partnership between industry, the NHS and academia and funded by UK Research and Innovation and industry partners to connect pathology services across the region using technology. This will lead to the full digitisation of NHS laboratories covering a population of three million people, allowing hospitals to pool resources, balance workload, and enable easier access to specialists across the region whose expertise may be quickly needed to make a clinical diagnosis.

Trusts to follow Leeds will include Bradford Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust, Calderdale and Huddersfield NHS Foundation Trust, The Mid Yorkshire Hospitals NHS Trust, and Airedale NHS Foundation Trust.

Dr Darren Treanor, NPIC's director, and a practising pathologist at Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust, said: "Leeds is the first of our six sites to go fully digital. Collectively, we are modernising our pathology services to become amongst the most advanced and interconnected anywhere in the world, and we hope to share our experience to help others across the NHS and beyond.

"The days of using glass slides and paper notes to determine and communicate a patient's diagnosis are numbered. As we move to digital ways of working we can improve quality and create a more structured digital workflow."

The project will also see the consortium deliver a Vendor Neutral Archive from Sectra. This will allow the trusts to pool imaging and build a platform for artificial intelligence crucial to improving diagnoses for cancers and other illnesses.

Jane Rendall, UK managing director for Sectra, one of the NPIC industry partners, said: "Digital pathology is about far more than replacing microscopes with computers. It's about fundamentally changing how pathology services can be configured across regions and across the country, so that patients can receive faster diagnoses, services can become more intelligent, and the NHS can make best use of its valuable pathologists. NPIC is at the forefront of this transformation."

ENDS

Notes to editors

About NPIC

Northern Pathology Imaging Co-operative, NPIC (Project no. 104687) is one of five centres supported by a £50m investment from the Data to Early Diagnosis and Precision Medicine strand of the government's Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund, managed and delivered by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), announced in 2018.

NPIC is a unique collaboration between NHS, academic and industry partners. NPIC is deploying digital pathology across hospitals in the North of England and will develop artificial intelligence tools to help diagnose cancer and other diseases.

More information can be found at: www.npic.ac.uk

About Sectra Imaging IT Solutions
With more than 30 years of innovation and approaching 2,000 installations worldwide, 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. Read more about Sectra and why Sectra PACS is "Best in KLAS" at https://medical.sectra.com/.