Northern Ireland Takes Lead in Deployment of Nationwide Electronic Care Record

Orion Health to build shared web-based clinical portal to improve the safety, quality, efficiency and integration of care

Health and Social Care Northern Ireland (HSCNI) has announced its selection of Orion Health Limited, a leading global supplier of e-Health software, to provide a clinical portal-based Electronic Care Record (ECR) for Northern Ireland. Covering a population of more than 1.8 million people, the ECR will enable the communication and sharing of patient data taken from multiple, existing information systems across acute, community, primary health and social care.

The contract follows a successful 'Proof of Concept' pilot of the Orion Health ECR in Ulster Hospital Dundonald, the Belfast City Hospital and 2 general practices in 2009 and 2010. This involved 200 clinicians and more than 9000 patients and provided the business case for the full roll out of the ECR across the HSC. It also demonstrated that the solution could reduce the length of clinic times, improve the quality and safety of patient services and achieve cost and efficiency savings in staff time and resources.

The Health Minister Edwin Poots said: "The implementation of the Electronic Care Record will contribute to the delivery of the key proposals within 'Transforming Your Care'. It is about improving the quality, sustainability and safety of patient and client care. I am confident that the Electronic Care Record system will assist in developing a sustainable healthcare system that delivers now and will continue to deliver in the future for the good of everyone in Northern Ireland."

"The Electronic Care Record will improve the quality and safety of patient care as the system makes all of the relevant existing information available to doctors, nurses and other staff at the point of care," said Dr Carolyn Harper, the HSCNI project sponsor. "The Electronic Care Record received a very positive reaction from frontline staff as it delivered the patient benefits we had anticipated, and is intuitive to use. We learned valuable lessons from the pilot project and are looking forward to a smooth roll out across the country."

As part of the ECR project, the Orion Health Clinical Portal will provide streamlined, secure, web-based access, from a single browser view, of patient information to authorised HSCNI health and social care professionals. The ECR will include critical patient information, including latest lab results, patient medications, allergies and clinical correspondence. Audit tools and patient privacy controls have been built into the ECR to help ensure patient confidentiality.

"As a busy clinician responsible for providing care for those who are acutely ill and also for those with chronic diseases like diabetes, I cannot understate the value of an Electronic Care Record," said Dr Roy Harper, Consultant Endocrinologist, Ulster Hospital and clinical champion for Northern Ireland's Electronic Care Record Proof of Concept Project. "The ECR will play a key role in delivering a patient centred service ensuring that the right information is available to health professionals where and when it is needed."

In addition to the clinical portal, HSCNI now has access to Orion Health's Rhapsody Integration Engine, forms technology, patient portal and case management software that will help support the management of long-term conditions and will provide the underpinning technology framework for sharing information across multi-disciplinary teams.

"Being selected as the ECR provider for Northern Ireland is further validation that our solutions can address the needs of the HSCNI, and the wider NHS, in these challenging times," commented Colin Henderson, UK and Ireland Manager, Orion Health. "HSCNI has a vision for more integrated healthcare to help manage patients across care settings, accessing and sharing information in a secure, role based manner and our technology portfolio enables this journey. The benefits document created after the proof of concept shows that many efficiencies were realised as a result of implementing this technology. Most importantly there was very positive feedback from the clinical community which shows that they like the solution, and they felt it contributed to improving patient safety and outcomes."

"This is a credible achievement being chosen to deliver such a strategic national-level project within Northern Ireland, and is further evidence that the creation of portals can provide a cost effective way to build electronic care records. It's about preserving existing systems and providing a platform that allows information to be easily accessed and shared, which can only be a good thing," said Charles Scatchard, Orion Health's President of International. "Northern Ireland has joined our expanding global community of regional and national healthcare providers who are choosing to improve healthcare delivery by using our proven solutions."

As part of a seven year contract, worth £9 million, the ECR will be deployed in 18 acute and community hospitals, all GP practices, community, mental health and social care users across the five regional trusts in Northern Ireland. Planned roll out will start in late 2012 with completion of the core elements anticipated early summer 2013.

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