



O2 Health launches new telehealth service in UK

The new service – called Side by Side – launches today following a successful trial by NHS Western Isles and O2 Health which demonstrated improved clinician productivity, a 30% reduction in travel costs and fewer appointment cancellations.

Side by Side is a secure software solution developed by O2 Health for the NHS and healthcare market. It enables clinicians to use their office computers to link up electronically and conduct personal and effective remote patient-clinician consultations. It incorporates video, audio and chat functionality plus a digital white board for on-the-spot diagrams and annotations. It can also be used by clinicians across multiple sites to share case notes, X-rays, scans, test results and DICOM images (e.g. ultrasounds, laparoscopies and electro cardiograms) in real-time. It is completely secure – working within the N3 network – and therefore supports highly sensitive patient information.

Side by Side is expected to be of interest to all NHS trusts keen to leverage the latest technology solutions to improve access to their services and increase productivity and efficiency of their clinicians. It is easy and cost-effective to install as it utilises conventional computers and broadband, with no need for new hardware or a dedicated room.

Western Isles Medical Director, James Ward, said “The Side by Side solution used during the trial was shaped in partnership, leveraging health service knowledge and clinical resources from NHS Western Isles and technology expertise and innovation from O2 Health. Whilst we have used video conferencing in some circumstances in the past, Side by Side has demonstrated how we could transform the way we deliver health services to our community. Our consultants have seen the benefits in their day to day schedules immediately – including greater efficiency, an ability to respond to patient care needs quickly and a reduction in the need to travel, saving both time and money. It allows them to spend more time on what they do best – communicating with patients.”

Of the clinicians involved in the trial:

- 80% said their ability to see patients sooner had increased
- 67% said their ability to diagnose had increased due to having access to all patient records
- 64% said future capacity would be better or much better due to improved time management and less time spent travelling.

The service provided significant reductions in time and travel costs. The 5 clinicians involved in the trial reclaimed a total of 98 hours’ of travel time in only 4 weeks.

Patients were also delighted with the service and found it very easy to use. They greatly appreciated not needing to travel for consultations and the consistency provided by being able to see the same consultant. Over the four week trial, 9 patient cancellations were avoided.

Keith Nurcombe, Managing Director, O2 Health commented “We’re delighted the trial with NHS Western Isles has seen such positive results; and that our partnership approach results in a solution that meets our customers’ requirements. We believe the Side by Side solution could be equally beneficial for NHS/healthcare organisations in urban environments with the potential for increased productivity and ultimately financial savings. In cities, consultants regularly travel between 20 and 40 minutes for face to face meetings, which could happen remotely using Side by Side. We see particular benefit for services such as hospital outpatient referrals and management of chronic and long term conditions.”

In the Western Isles, preparations are underway to extend its use into Dietetics, Speech and Language Therapy, delivery of Psychological Therapies and Paediatrics in 2012.

Side by Side was developed in conjunction with Telefónica Digital's Health Research & Development team in Granada. eHealth is one of the key digital service focus areas for Telefónica's new Digital business which has been formed to create new opportunities in the digital world.

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