Volume 1 / Issue 6 2005 - Editorial

RFID and Speech Recognition

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This new issue of *IT@Networking* Communications starts with a topic which reflects one of our magazine *Hospital's* heading, namely outsourcing.

Indeed, IT is often the first area hospital managers look to when considering outsourcing one of their activities. It is a costly field, one that evolves quickly and requires precise technical skills. In his article, Professor Menachemi helps managers fine tune their decision-making process in this area.

To follow, we have decided to focus on two technologies, which have both their opponents as well as fierce supporters, but are undoubtedly emerging on the European hospital scene and opening up new possibilities regarding patient safety and nursing, medical and administrative staff efficiency: RFID and speech recognition.

We first explain how these systems work and develop at the European level, before focusing on some practical applications. A patient localisation project inside a hospital in Luxembourg, and a medication traceability scheme at the Saarbrücken hospital (Germany) illustrate some of the possibilities of RFID technology. A Norwegian hospital details its perfect integration of speech recognition into hospital workflow. Learning to work with this technique has even become part of the medical students' curriculum in Norway.

Dr Carstensen raises the issue of security and updates on the implementation of a speech recognition system at the Saarland university hospital.

Our Awards chapter puts forward a British establishment, the South Staffordshire and Shropshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, which uses IT and its powerful communication possibilities in order to improve care ethics. The communication platform developed within the hospital has also impacted the quality of care, as it contributes to finding the best option for the patient based on discussions between professionals about difficult, but real issues.

At the end of the issue, we report on a seminar organised by the European Commission around telemedicine. As it is attempting to harmonise this booming sector at the European level, the Commission has organised this exchange forum to get input from experts and eventually ti solidify its proposals in the area of telemedicine.

Published on : Mon, 28 Nov 2005