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Robotic Dispensing System and Hospital Pharmacy System Synchronised for the First Time

Macclesfield District Hospital has implemented a bi-directional interface from iSoft to allow its robotic dispensing system to automatically update its pharmacy system when medicines are loaded or dispensed. The hospital, which is part of East Cheshire NHS Trust, hopes this will reduce dispensing errors and increase efficiency through better stock control. It also hopes it will free-up the department's 60 staff so they can focus on patient care.

The trust implemented the Mach 4 robotic system, which can store up to 18,000 drug packs, in 2006 alongside iSoft's pharmacy system. However, this is the first time that the two have been synchronised to automatically update each other and although both systems are common in hospitals, this kind of two-way communication is not, with very few hospitals having this vital facility.

The robot is synchronised to the iSoft system, which is automatically updated so that deliveries are reconciled against purchase orders. On arrival the packs are loaded onto the robot's conveyor and scanned, sorted and stored automatically, which means less time searching for packs and quicker processing of prescriptions. A new workflow monitor also allows pharmacy staff to prioritise dispensing, based on the prescription type and urgency and enables the pharmacy monitor performance against key trust targets. A report sent to the iSoft system tells staff in which chute drugs have been dispensed and whether the order has been fulfilled.

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