

QEHB ventures into the world of community pharmacy

Outpatient pharmacy is under renewed pressure from the government to improve its performance in terms of speed and accuracy. But how can this be achieved?

The outpatient pharmacy in the newly built Queen Elizabeth Hospital Birmingham (QEHB) may just have the answer as they have followed in the footsteps of community pharmacy and introduced new systems incorporating cutting edge technology. The results have been dramatic and patients are reaping the benefits as waiting times have already been reduced from an average 40 minutes to less than 10.

Here, we look at how the pharmacy team at the QEHB introduced a community pharmacy into a large hospital setting and how technology has been instrumental in achieving this.

The statistics are impressive. With 1213 inpatient beds, 100 critical care beds, 30 operating theatres and built at a cost of £545 million, the Queen Elizabeth Hospital Birmingham is the first new acute hospital for 70 years and is the largest of its type in Europe. The hospital already treats all of Britain's seriously injured military patients, is a national centre for organ transplant, cancer research and treatment, and a regional centre for trauma, burns and neurology. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that this state of the art hospital decided to develop a new concept in hospital pharmacy – a community pharmacy within a hospital setting.



Pharmacist Inderjit Singh and the pharmacy team at QEHB

Whilst many community pharmacies are no strangers to embracing new technology and modernisation, hospital pharmacies have traditionally been labelled as dinosaurs with

40 minute waiting times for outpatient prescriptions the norm. The recent opening of the hi-tech, flagship pharmacy in the QEHB outpatients department flies in the face of tradition. But what makes it special and how has it evolved to provide a top quality service to its patients?

One of the most critical things to its success was the choice of systems supplier. Inderjit Singh, Associate Director of Commercial Pharmacy

Services at University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust, explains: "QEHB was the first hospital to venture into the community pharmacy world and from our point of view, we were starting from scratch. This was a flagship project and we needed to spend time evaluating the systems on the market. Systems traditionally are built to cope with the primary care environment but our needs were different.

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Positive Solutions were the only systems supplier prepared to be flexible enough to work in partnership with us and adapt the software to fit in with our specialist secondary care requirements. Added to that, we were working to a tight timescale and we were confident that Positive Solutions would deliver.

"The task before us was somewhat daunting as we needed a system which could process over 8,000 items per month, interface with our patient administration system (PAS) and which would integrate easily with the latest in robotic dispensing. The answer was to install Analyst Integrated Pharmacy System which encompasses PMR and EPOs systems. Being a hospital pharmacy we do not issue FP10's so the system needed to be developed to default to private prescriptions. We also needed daily reporting on the prescriptions being dispensed so that they could be cross charged to any of our four specialist divisions which each control their own budgets.



Pharmacist Inderjit Singh



Outpatient pharmacy at the newly built QEHB

"Positive Solutions were able to adapt the Analyst system to interface with our patient administration system (PAS) which identifies each patient via a unique hospital reference number. We simply key this in and within a second, we have all the patient's details. This saves us a huge amount of time as the majority of patients visit us just once before being referred back to their own GP. Without this capability, we would have to key in the details of each individual patient as we can't build up a large database of patients as community pharmacy would. This, combined with the bi-directional link up with our robotic dispenser has seen massive patient benefits in terms of accuracy and time savings. Whilst on average a hospital pharmacy takes 40 minutes to dispense a prescription, our waiting times on average are already down to well under 8 minutes."

Commercial Manager, Martin Jones, describes how Positive Solutions had to pull out all the stops to get the project up and running! "When the Trust made the decision to go into partnership

appointed to the project. We already had the industry leading robotic interface for their Rowa dispensing robot, but then set about working closely with the QEHB team to develop and

"When the Trust made the decision to go into partnership with Positive Solutions as their systems supplier it was literally all systems go."

modify Analyst so that it could link up with their existing ordering, reporting and patient administration systems. Our software developers worked tirelessly with the hospital to ensure the system provided the pharmacy with exactly the capabilities that were needed, the engineers were on site day and night to ensure the installation went smoothly and our training team have been working with all the pharmacy staff to ensure they are fully familiar with how

with Positive Solutions as their systems supplier it was literally all systems go. An experienced team including software developers, project managers, field engineers and trainers were immediately

the system works. It has been fantastic to work on such a high profile project which is now being looked upon by other hospitals as a new way to deliver outpatient pharmacy services in the future."

further information



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