**Barcoding technology at Royal Cornwall Hospitals NHS Trust tackles inventory management issues**

Royal Cornwall Hospitals NHS Trust is a demonstrator site for the Department of Health’s Scan4Safety programme, demonstrating the adoption of GS1 and PEPPOL standards.

The first step of the programme was to get our inventory management under control, by using smarter and more effective systems and practices to improve efficiencies, cost savings and patient safety.

Previously we used a combination of manual processes and spreadsheets to manage inventory. Those processes have now become obsolete, and we have since implemented [Ingenica Solutions’](http://www.ingenicasolutions.co.uk/) 360 IM, which is the first GS1 certified solution for inventory management in the NHS. This solution supports our implementation of the Scan4Safety project. The barcoding technology, similar to that which is used in supermarkets, is helping our trust tackle inventory management issues such as over-ordering of stock and product wastage which were the biggest challenges for us. It was also a task that was generally left to busy clinicians. Stock rooms were often overstocked, which in turn led to obsolete stock and under-utilised space. This also highlighted that clinicians were having to spend valuable time ordering and managing stock, which resulted in less time for their primary role providing frontline patient care; now we have reassigned this task back to the inventory management team.

Since going live with the programme, we have achieved great results. Our purpose as a procurement department is ‘To Improve Quality of Life’; there is no doubt in our minds that both Scan4Safety and inventory management help us fulfil this purpose. We’re in a position where we can track and trace products and supplies, and have an understanding of who, what, where and when products are used on patients; we can now scan implants from point of ordering to point of use.

Scanning products at the point of care and having a system that automatically orders the replacement has allowed us to embark on a journey of automating transactional processes in procurement. We are beginning to see full end to end purchase-to-pay activity being automated with no human intervention. In time, this will allow us to point our human resource to more value added activity.

We also know exactly what equipment was used for each patient. The new system has been brilliant for us, as we can scan products to the patient and in the case of a product recall we can see instantly which patients have been affected. In the past we would have used a lot of clinical time to extract this information; often taking our clinicians hours or days to recall a faulty product as they would need to manually search through patient’s records. Now it takes seconds to recall a product.

In Cardiac Catheterisation alone, we have released some 1,300 hours annually from ordering supplies back to the clinicians, which in turn goes back to the care of the patients. In addition to releasing time back to care, by the end of the implementation we aim to deliver significant savings by eliminating wastage, quantifying procedure costs and improved space utilisation. Finally we have started to track waste and we are on track to see a reduction of around 50% by completion of the third year since launch.

Our system also flags when a product is going to expire, and recommends how much we should be ordering; again reducing waste. In fact since going live with Scan4Safety in 2016 we have reduced product spend by 15% in areas where we care live with the system.

Resources in the NHS are scarce and for Royal Cornwall Hospitals NHS Trust being in a position where we can strategically manage our inventory is a huge step forward. Our team has full control, visibility and transparency of the supply chain through access to real-time data.

We’ve improved operational and financial efficiencies, and as our Scan4Safety journey continues, we’re happy to share experiences so far, and details of our inventory management implementation with others – feel free to get in touch with us!

Our video explains more. (It does refer to inventory management system, Atticus, which is now called Ingenica Solutions’ 360 IM.)

<https://www.ingenicasolutions.co.uk/royal-cornwall-nhs-trust-scan4safety-video/>