

GP Test Requesting in Healthy Prestatyn

The frustrating experience of patients sometimes having to return to their GP practice to have repeat blood tests is fast becoming a thing of the past, thanks to a new computer system.

The service, known as GPTR, is moving GP practices from paper-based processes, to using a fully electronic system to make test requests and receive results. It's helping to ensure blood tests are ordered accurately every time, avoiding occasional missed tests due to the paper process.

Carolyn Jones, a Data Manager at Healthy Prestatyn in North Wales, said that after using the GPTR for all their blood test requests, her practice will never look back, "We're used to it now, it's a good system", she said. She admitted there were some teething problems when they first started using it, "the main issue was the speed – it can be slower than the old method – but now the benefits far outweigh the cons", she said.

Healthy Prestatyn was one of the first practices in Wales to use the GPTR, having volunteered to be a 'pilot' practice in 2013. Since then they've taken it fully on board and now make 100% of their requests electronically. With just over 21,000 patients, spread across five sites, the team have found it an especially useful service, "We make around 2500 test requests a month," Carolyn explained "so having a modern electronic process makes complete sense".

Carolyn explained some of the benefits the practice has experienced from the GPTR, including:

- An audit trail, so they know who ordered a test
- If a patient loses their blood request form, a new one can easily be printed off
- The doctor gets what they ordered - in the past, the handwritten note could be difficult for a laboratory to interpret and some tests were missed, but now the doctor knows they will get all the tests they request.
- If a patient's been in hospital, the GP can see any blood tests they've had, and import the results into the patient's GP records
- If a patient's been to a diabetic clinic, the GP can access the diabetic clinic results
- Details such as the patient's date of birth and address are automatically completed as part of the test request

The system is currently available in North and West Wales, and is being introduced into parts of South Wales. Carolyn introduced it into her practice gradually, expanding its use from a few phlebotomists and administration staff initially, before encouraging other teams and the GPs to take it up.

"We started off with a few members of staff who were quite IT savvy, and we looked for the positives from it, and then we could encourage other people and clinicians to use it."

GPs can see results from hospitals, and can be confident they will receive results for all the tests they request, "Previously some tests were missed, usually down to problems deciphering handwriting, but now the GP knows they will get all the results, and can see them all in one report," Carolyn explained.

Carolyn says she's looking forward to seeing more improvements in the GPTR over forthcoming months and years, "It's got faster compared to two years ago, and it's getting faster and better all the time, it would be great to see it expand into other test areas like smears and x-rays"

When the practice introduced the GPTR, the Senior Key Team Coordinator, Darryn, produced a crib sheet explaining how to use the system, "It was just a little crib sheet for people to follow, but little things like that really help, and encourage people" and a regular message she gives to people is "it's well worth persevering".