

The Welsh Clinical Portal benefits cancer care

Dr Mohid Khan is a Consultant Gastroenterologist and the clinical lead of the Wales Neuroendocrine cancer service based in Cardiff, he has told us how using the Welsh Clinical Portal has improved efficiency and improved services for patients.

The Welsh Clinical Portal is an electronic work space for hospital clinicians. It makes test results and a wide range of electronic documents, such as transfer of care documentation, theatre notes, referral and outpatients' letters available wherever the patient receives care in Wales, regardless of geographical or organisational boundaries. It also gives the clinician, with the patient's consent, access to the notes held by the patient's GP – the Welsh GP record.

The service that Dr Khan works in covers the whole of South Wales, and patients are sent to his specialty in Cardiff from other hospitals across Wales. Prior to the portal being available, Dr Khan needed to rely on important information, such as scans and test results, being sent to him from the patient's local hospital, as he explained:

"Previously, I would not have access to a scan or important cancer blood marker that they had done in their local hospital (or GP practice) before they came to clinic unless it was sent by that organisation in paper format in time. Quite often, when they are in my clinic, I would not have received the results so the patient could be sitting and waiting for the result and our clinic staff could be running around, making phone calls trying to get the information faxed across."

This has now changed as the information is available at his fingertips through the Welsh Clinical Portal.

"Now I can go onto the Welsh Clinical Portal when they are sitting in my clinic. I can access their results, both scan results and blood test results, and this improves the efficiency of the clinic. It means that the patients can have their results and I can make informed decisions there and then. This also improves confidence of the patients in the service."

The Welsh Clinical Portal has also benefitted the Neuroendocrine Cancer Multi-Disciplinary Team (or MDT) meetings which make decisions about a patient's treatment path.

"The MDT looks at complex tumours with clinicians from across Wales in different health boards. In preparation for that MDT we can access all the scan reports and blood test results and tumour markers, which is an improvement. It just helps the discussions by having the right information there and then. It has helped the MDT immensely."

Another feature, the Welsh Patient Referral Service, which is accessed via the Welsh Clinical Portal, has added to the speediness of patient care being delivered.

By having an electronic referral service, referrals for specialist care are available to view by consultants as soon as the GP has completed the electronic referral form.

Dr Khan explained how this has helped.

“We’ve been using the Welsh Patient Referral service for over a year now, and it has improved our vetting of patients being referred for specialist care in Gastroenterology.”

Prior to this being available, GPs would need to dictate letters, these would then need to be typed up, sent to the hospital, and allocated manually to the right consultants by medical records. These would then await vetting by my colleagues and I by hand before being sent back to medical records in order to place on the correct clinic or endoscopy waiting list. This would all take time with a number of potential points for delays.

“The GPs are now getting a much quicker electronic vetting service, hence the patient is getting a much speedier service. I can access the electronic referrals anywhere I can access an NHS computer and the Welsh Clinical Portal. I can send back messages to the GP about whether we are accepting or rejecting that referral and importantly to be able to offer that GP advice for that patient electronically in a timely manner.”

The Welsh Clinical Portal is available in hospitals across Wales.