

BlackBerry nurse alert system reduces hospital stay

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A system that tracks unplanned admissions and automatically sends an alert to the BlackBerry of a nurse familiar with that patient's case has slashed hospital stay figures at a trust in the Midlands.



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The Recurring Admission Patient Alert system brings together patient information and data using a BlackBerry, and gives all staff instant access to a patient's clinical information.

Staff at the Sherwood Forest Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust can now alert nurses who know a chronically ill patient's history when they enter the hospital for non-routine care, often through A&E.

The most relevant nurse is sent an alert of the unplanned admission via a message sent to a personal digital assistant or BlackBerry.

The system, developed in conjunction with technology company Orion Health, has proved to be highly effective over its first six months.

The latest figures show that the average length of an unplanned hospital stay for lung cancer patients has gone down from eight to six days and for lower gastrointestinal patients from nine-and-a-half days to five days.

Carolyn Regan, lead Macmillan cancer nurse at the trust, said that the system has shown 'dramatic results'.

'The RAPA system saves money and time,' she said. 'Sometimes patients were in hospital for days having unnecessary tests.'

Now the patient's key worker is alerted by an automatic email that they have been admitted and they [the key worker] can check if the reason for admission is cancer-related or not.'

The trust has extended the use of the system to track patients who have been readmitted after discharge. It is also being used to identify patients known to carry MRSA or Clostridium difficile so they are treated and the risk of infection contained.