



Healthcare Report

Improving patient
safety and efficiency in
the NHS

A report prepared by GS1 UK

July 2010



1 Background

Contents

- 1. Background
- 2. Key Findings
- 3. Report Summary

With the UK Government's focus on reducing the national debt and boosting efficiency across public services, the NHS, with its annual budget of over £100 billion will be a key part of the debate. How can patient care be improved and front-line services maintained, whilst also controlling spending?

In the light of this debate, GS1 UK has conducted independent research with hospital doctors and nurses to gauge their opinion about improving ward services and quality of care, as well as the role of technology in enhancing patient safety and efficiency.

In partnership with Nursing Standard magazine and Hospital Dr, GS1 UK surveyed 861 hospital nurses and 409 hospital doctors across the UK to gather their opinions.



2 Key Findings

Hospital doctors and nurses struggle to locate vital patient data

The survey respondents were asked to assess how often they were unable to locate vital patient data. The findings of this research highlighted that an alarming number of doctors and nurses struggle to locate patient data on a daily basis.

Nearly 20,040 doctors state that they spend over an hour a day waiting for vital patient data. Meanwhile a quarter of nurses find that patient records and lab results go missing at least once a day.

Survey Data

- 35% of doctors find that key patient information goes missing at least once a day and within this, 19% find this happens several times a day.
- A further 21% find that key patient information goes missing every few days.
- 20,040 doctors spend over an hour a day waiting for key patient information.
- Over a quarter (26%) of hospital nurses admit that patient and lab results go missing at least once a day.

20,040 doctors state that they spend over an hour a day waiting for vital patient data

On average, how often do you find key patient information has gone missing from your ward?



Over three quarters of doctors would like to see real-time electronic patient records in place.

Nearly two-thirds of nurses require a real-time view of vital stock levels.

Better information sharing is the key to improved patient care state hospital doctors and nurses.

The doctors and nurses surveyed were asked to highlight the issues they felt were impacting patient care and what processes could be put in place to improve standards.

A major issue highlighted by both doctors and nurses was miscommunication, whether it is through shift handovers or the misplacement of physical patient records. 69% of doctor's felt that better structured handovers would improve overall patient safety, highlighting that electronic systems and tracking need to be in place to abate existing inefficiencies.

Survey Data

- 48% of hospital doctors feel that the use of physical records instead of electronic systems is the cause of problems in patient care.
- 69% of hospital doctors feel that better structured handovers will contribute to improved patient safety.
- 78% highlight that miscommunication in multiple shift handovers is responsible for causing problems with patient care.
- 38% of hospital nurses believe care is compromised because patient data isn't shared between different doctors.

Which of the following do you think are responsible for causing problems with patient care?

Hospital doctors survey	
The Use of physical patient records instead of electronic systems	48%
Inadequately trained or experienced clinical staff	61%
Staff not having enough time to thoroughly check patient records before assessing patients	61%
Nursing shortages	70%
Target driven culture	74%

What do you think would most contribute to improving patient safety in your hospital?

Hospital doctors survey	
Better structured handovers	69%
Electronic patient records	64%
Less targets	61%



Hospital doctors and nurses demand more accurate information to improve patient care

The research also highlighted that both doctors and nurses alike feel that technology is required to give them the accurate information needed to improve efficiency and patient safety in UK hospitals.

Over three quarters of doctors would like to see real-time electronic patient records in place, and nearly two-thirds of nurses require a real-time view of vital stock levels.

The top three technology improvements identified by doctors relate to making information available electronically:

Real-time electronic patient records 78%

Real-time views of stock levels 56%

Bar coded wristbands to accurately identify patients 52%

The top three technologies identified by nurses are:

Real-time views of stock levels 63%

Electronic records to track the location of equipment 56%

Bar coded wristbands to accurately identify patients 37%



52% of doctors believe bar coded wristbands would help doctors and nurses perform their roles more effectively.

Bar coded patient wristbands key to reducing the number of safety incidents in hospitals

Over half of the doctors surveyed believed that bar coded wristbands would help hospital staff perform more efficiently.

From a nurses perspective, 44% of respondents feel that bar coded wristbands could reduce patient safety incidents by 50%.

Survey Data

- 52% of doctors believe bar coded wristbands would help doctors and nurses perform their roles more effectively.
- 44% of nurses feel that bar coded wristbands would reduce patient safety incidents by over 50%.



14,400 hospital doctors feel they rarely have enough time to check patient records

Doctors and nurses lacking time to thoroughly check patient records

When asked about the time they have to check patient data, a large number of our doctor and nurse respondents felt that they had little time to check patient records thoroughly before treating them.

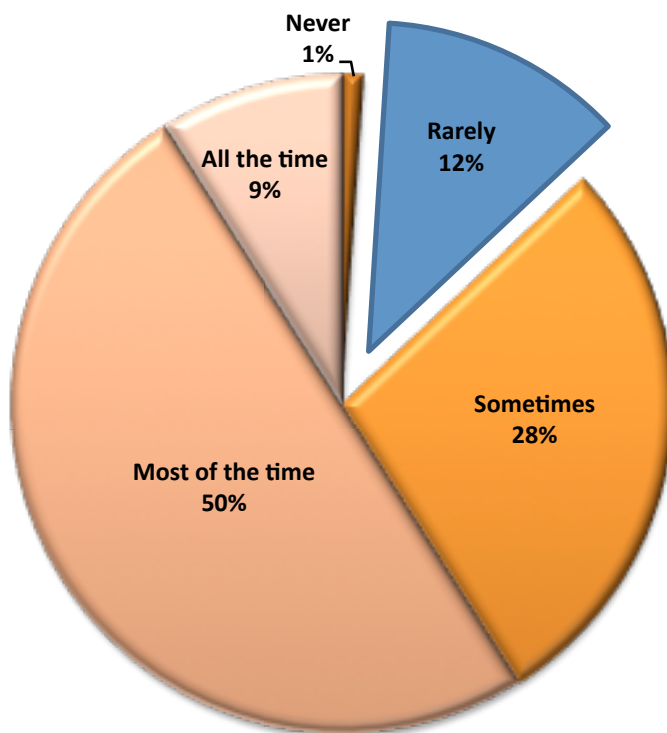
The findings of this question highlights the need within the NHS to put processes and technology in place to enable key hospital staff to work as efficiently as possible, freeing up time to help them administer the best patient care possible.

Survey Data

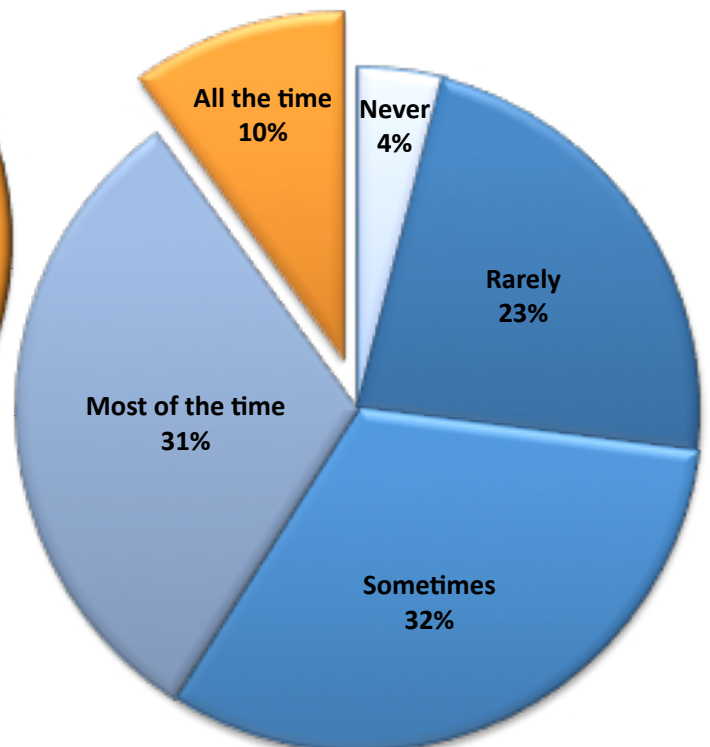
- An alarming 12% or 14,400 hospital doctors feel they rarely have enough time to check patient records (Source: NHS Choices)
- Only 10% of nurses feel they have time to check patient records thoroughly all of the time

Do you feel you currently have enough time to check patients' medical records thoroughly before treating them?

Doctors



Nurses



3 Report Summary

Given the scale of the budget deficit, whilst everyone agrees that front-line services should be protected, it is clear that the NHS will be affected in some way. Therefore making the best use of doctors and nurses time on the wards and enabling them to treat patients quickly and effectively are key.

Simple changes to the way hospitals organise wards and promote staff communication can have a major impact on the quality of patient care given by the UK's doctors and nurses.



At the root of this communication is the demand from medical professionals for more real-time, accurate electronic data. The use of GS1 standardised bar codes and Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) technology can:

- Reduce errors by matching the right patient to the right treatment
- Track medication so that patients receive the right dose at the right time
- Prevent counterfeit medication entering the hospital by identifying and tracing them in the supply chain
- Protect patients from harmful medication with accurate product identification, efficient recalls and withdrawals

- Reduce data errors on patient and inventory records with accurate product data

From an operational perspective, there are real efficiency gains including:

- Reducing paperwork and manual processing and enable staff to spend more time caring for patients
- Reducing time spent relabeling products
- Replenishing stocks automatically to take away need for manual ordering and counting
- Reducing time wasted by inaccurate data sharing
- Providing access to centralised, accurate and standardised product data

A number of hospitals including Mayday Healthcare NHS Trust*, Birmingham Children's Hospital** and Leeds Teaching Hospital*** have already successfully implemented systems for patient and asset tracking. The results of the GS1 UK surveys show that now is the time for other healthcare institutions to follow suit to increase efficiency and most importantly patient safety.

* Mayday Healthcare NHS Trust case study, 2009, GS1 UK, www.gs1uk.org/news

** Birmingham Childrens Hospital case study, 2008, GS1 UK, www.gs1uk.org/news

*** Leeds Teaching Hospital case study, 2010, GS1 UK, www.gs1uk.org/news

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About GS1 UK

GS1 UK has driven innovation in the supply chain for over thirty years. It is part of the global GS1 organisation, dedicated to the development and implementation of global data standards and solutions for the supply chain. The GS1 System is the most widely used supply chain standards system in the world. GS1 UK helps industry to implement these data standards through the use of bar codes, Radio Frequency Identification (RFID), Global Data Synchronisation (GDS) and electronic business messaging.

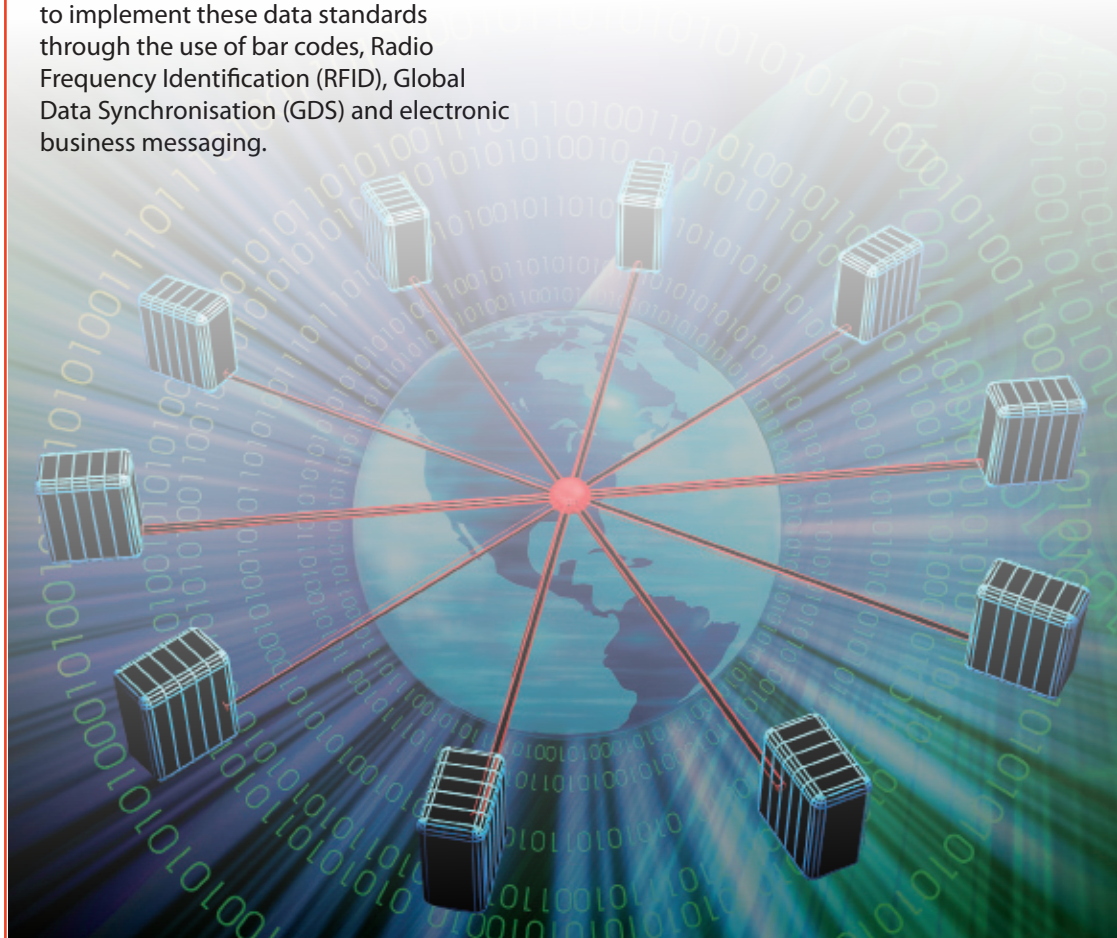
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