

A busy summer for Alston Healthcare

Alston Healthcare is focusing on telehealth and telemedicine to deliver improvements in patient care in Cumbria. Here is how the projects are progressing.....

Telehealth

Telehealth uses systems for monitoring the health status of service users. Devices monitor vital signs remotely. The physiological data recorded is sent electronically (using phone lines or wireless technology) to clinical staff to enable assessment of an individual's health status and to detect changes that might need attention. Potential uses for Telehealth include:-

- Ongoing monitoring of a person's health status i.e. chronic disease, acute exacerbation of disease, presenting symptoms
- Medicines management
- Supporting early discharge of patients from an acute unit (monitoring can be done at home)
- Admission avoidance (monitoring can be done at home)
- Mental health monitoring
- Communication between carers, community, health and social care professionals
- Health Education (information giving)
- Social / health activities i.e. internet gym

Telehealth can enable the service user to become more independent and give them an increased knowledge base as to how they might manage their own health hence reducing demand on health care providers). It has a key role in health promotion and early detection of disease so facilitating early intervention and admission avoidance.

What is Alston Healthcare?

Alston Healthcare (a social enterprise) has been awarded grant funding from the Department of Health Social Enterprise Pathfinder fund to look at ways of improving health and social care using e-health solutions. e-health can be defined briefly as the deployment of technology to support the delivery of health services.

Our project aims to use e-health to:

- Enable delivery of treatment and care closer to home
- Keep service users at home and closer to their families
- Reduce the cost of providing services so enabling resources to be used more effectively in our communities.

It also aims to:

- Have a fit for purpose professional and business approach to developing services
- Share the innovative approaches we develop across Cumbria

A steering group meets monthly and includes staff from the GP Surgery, Hospital, Age Concern, League of Friends and community. Cybermoor Services is the accountable body

Contact us

Alston Healthcare is part of Cybermoor Services Ltd
Alston Town Hall, Alston, Cumbria, CA9 3RF.

T: 01434 382808 F: 01434 381211

E: info@alstonhealthcare.co.uk

W: www.alstonhealthcare.co.uk

Taking Telehealth forward in Cumbria

It is envisaged that the Telehealth Project will be split into three phases with the second and third phases subject to further funding. Phase one (a pilot study) will take place from January 2009 – March 2009. The pilot will consist of 2 - 3 rural areas with a project group in each area. A steering group has been formed and the necessary planning for the processes, training and implementation of this phase of the project is underway. The aim of this first phase is to:

- To promote personal independence, relieve anxiety and reduce the level of service input by using a range of Telehealth monitoring equipment within the home setting.

The objectives are to:

- Enable people to monitor their chronic disease independently
- Promote health and wellbeing for chronic disease sufferers.
- Facilitate the reduction of anxiety and promote mental health
- Reduce acute exacerbations
- Reduce the level of service input without reducing quality of care
- Reduce re-admissions
- Support early discharge and care at home



Video Assessment

A video communication system over which patients can be assessed remotely by nurses and doctors is being implemented. The advantages to the patient is reduced travel to get the right treatment, expertise is available for assessments without travel and frees up more time for staff to see more patients. Its use will include Minor injuries/illness, dermatology problems, patient reviews and consultations where the patient may have to travel considerable distance. The video links will be initially trialed between Alston and Penrith hospitals, but will expand to others shortly after this initial trial.

HELPFUL DEFINITIONS

e-Health - an overarching term used to describe the application of information and communications technologies in the health sector

Telemedicine - includes all types of physical and psychological measurements that do not require a patient to travel to a specialist. When this service works, patients need to travel less to a specialist or conversely the specialist has a larger catchment area.

Telehealth - an expansion of telemedicine, it encompasses preventive, promotive *and* curative aspects e.g. transmission of medical data for diagnosis or disease management (sometimes referred to as remote monitoring)

Telecare - offering remote care of elderly and vulnerable people, providing the care and reassurance needed to allow them to remain living in their own homes. The use of sensors may be part of a package which can provide support for people with illnesses such as dementia, at risk of falling. *Definitions courtesy of Wikipedia.*

The Team

Daniel Heery - *Project Supervisor*

Daniel raises finance for Alston Healthcare and is responsible for overall management of the project. He has a background in rural development and technology projects.

Chris Buckingham, *Registered Nurse and Nurse Advisor*

Project Manager Video Link

Chris' role is to pioneer video technology and e-health for patient assessment.

Jan Boulding, *Registered Nurse and Nurse Lecturer*
Project Manager Telecare and Telehealth

Jan's main role is to manage and evaluate aspects of the project related the use of telecare and telehealth products; to work in collaboration with our health and social care partners to enable this new technology to support the health and care of people at home.

Collette Eames, *Community Nurse Practitioner*
Clinical Champion for Telehealth & Telecare

Collette's role is clinical support of staff and service

Keep up to date with the project at www.alstonhealthcare.co.uk