South West Wales Cancer Network increases patient safety, boosts staff productivity and reduces costs with CRD

When the South West Wales Cancer Network (SWWCN) needed a way to automate regular reporting from its CIS ChemoCare electronic prescribing system, it chose CRD from ChristianSteven Software. The CRD solution has enabled the SWWCN to free up clinical staff time, optimise the supply of expensive chemotherapy drugs, improve patient safety, and maximise the number of Patient Access claims the SWWCN makes against a total worth hundreds of thousands of pounds a year.

**Background and Challenge**

The SWWCN provides cancer care and chemotherapy treatment for thousands of patients a year across eight NHS hospitals, including Singleton, Morriston, Bronglais, Withybush, Prince Philip, Glangwili, Neath Port Talbot and Princess of Wales.

In 2010, the SWWCN successfully rolled out CIS ChemoCare across the eight sites to comply with the Welsh Assembly Government’s “Strategic Framework Designed to Tackle Cancer 2” which required there to be electronic chemotherapy prescribing in place within NHS Wales by the end of March that year.
The overall aims of the new system are to provide the highest levels of service, improve patient safety, increase internal communication and collaboration across the large geographic area, and provide robust, accurate and auditable data for the various clinical, administrative and financial teams.

Gail Povey, Lead Pharmacist for the ChemoCare Service at the SWWCN, explains further “We run a very busy service, with hundreds of patient visits and treatments every week. Having an electronic prescribing system has allowed us to accurately track the administration of drugs and optimise supply, as well as providing us with a wealth of centralised information that was previously distributed around the hospitals often only in written form.”

With many chemotherapy drugs costing up to £3,000 per treatment it was important for the SWCCN pharmacy team to use the new data to get a clear view of stock levels, prescribing rates and costs. Gail created a small number of one-off custom reports using Crystal Reports. However, demand for regular reporting from the system began to grow as other teams, such as the administration, clinical and finance functions, also saw the potential for improving service levels and decision-making.

Gail continues “Producing and distributing reports was beginning to take up more of my time and I could see the point where I would end up spending at least one day a week simply running, formatting and sending regular reports, which would have a significant impact on my primary role as a pharmacist.”

The team realised they needed a report scheduling and automation solution, and, following a recommendation from an outside IT Consultant, downloaded a trial version of CRD from ChristianSteven. “I could see straight away that CRD was right for us,” says Gail. “It was intuitive, easy to use and ideal for automating the distribution of our regular weekly and monthly reports.”

After a short pilot phase the team was able to secure funding for the software from the Cancer Directorate using a business case based on time saved through automation, as well as the cost benefits of maximising the number of Patient Access rebate claims the Network made.

Gail explains further “In order to achieve NICE approval, many suppliers have set up Patient Access schemes that effectively mean a proportion of the treatment is provided free of charge as long as the Trust submits a rebate form. Submitting claims on time has the potential to save the SWWCN hundreds of thousands of pounds a year. We were able to show that, using CRD, we could automatically prompt pharmacy staff to complete and return the forms and therefore maximise our cost savings. Even if the automated report helped us avoid missing just two or three claims a year then CRD would have paid for itself.”

**Solution and Benefits**

CRD is now up and running at the SWWCN, automatically scheduling and distributing a wide variety of different weekly and monthly reports in XLS and PDF format.

As well as the Patient Access report, the pharmacy team receives several other reports which enable it to optimise the supply of expensive chemotherapy treatments – balancing stock levels against patient demand.

The finance and clinical teams also receive regular reports that enable them to improve service levels and decision-making, as well as boost their productivity by reducing the administration burden and increasing time spent with patients.

Patient safety has also been improved by automatically generating a report to prompt senior nursing staff to update CIS ChemoCare with details of whether chemotherapy treatment was given or not on the ward. Gail explains “In order to reduce the risk of cardiac toxicity it is important to track the amount of certain chemotherapy treatments a patient receives over their lifetime. Prompting senior nursing staff to update the system provides us with the most up-to-date and accurate centralised information. Since using the automated report we have more than halved the number of "Not Recorded as Given" entries in our data and expect to drive this down still further.”

**Future**

Gail concludes “CRD has been extremely reliable and has enabled us to really exploit the value of the centralised data created by CIS ChemoCare. In addition, it is helping us to deliver improved patient safety, increased staff productivity and cost savings. It has also freed up my time to focus on my primary role as a pharmacist. Once configured, CRD just gets on with it, consistently running and distributing our regular reports – even if I am away sick, on holiday or simply very busy.”

“And the great thing is we are only just scratching the surface of what CRD can do for the SWWCN. We are already building other applications using some of CRD’s advanced scheduling types, such as events-based schedules, to, for example, ensure that chemotherapy treatment ordered on an individual patient basis is received on time. This will further extend the value of CRD as well as our return on investment in this unique piece of software.”

**Business Benefits Realized with CRD**

- Freed up lead pharmacist time to focus on primary job role
- Enabled the SWWCN to fully leverage the value of the central data created by CIS ChemoCare
- Optimised supply of expensive chemotherapy medicines
- Reduced costs by helping maximise the number of claims the SWWCN makes against a variety of Patient Access schemes
- Increased clinical staff productivity by alleviating administration burden
- Improved patient safety through the collection of more accurate information on chemotherapy treatment in the ward
- Planned additional uses will increase return on original investment in CRD still further