

## **Patient Safety in NHS Connecting for Health**

### **NHS Connecting for Health**

NHS Connecting for Health (NHS CFH) is an agency of the Department of Health in England established to deliver the National Programme for IT in the NHS in England. The National Health Service (NHS) delivers most aspects of health care in the UK. It is free at the point of use and funded from general taxation. The NHS in England provides healthcare for the population of 53 million people (UK population is 60 million). British primary care is already highly computerised with almost 100% usage for electronic prescribing, EPRs, uses of templates for chronic disease management etc. In primary care NHS CFH will be providing electronic transfer of prescriptions (ETP), electronic transfer of notes between GP surgeries (GP2GP) and access to the summary care record (NCRS). Secondary care is much less comprehensively computerised and widespread installation of systems providing care packages will be proceeding. NHS CFH systems will be connected via 'the Spine', which relates to NCRS, ETP and GP2GP.

### **The Clinical Safety Management Approach in NHS CFH**

The aim of this approach is to deliver IT systems to the NHS which will as safe as design and forethought will allow. Our approach is based on the principles of IEC 61508 an international standard for safety critical software. Our approach allows quality assurance of suppliers' processes in delivering safe products to the NHS. It requires 3 key pieces of documentation

- A patient safety assessment (an end-to-end hazard assessment of the product in context in which it will be used)
- A safety case (that describes how identified hazards are treated)
- A safety closure report (providing the evidence that hazards have been treated as set out in the safety case)

The Clinical Safety Group within NHS CFH reviews the safety closure reports and, if these are accepted, issues Certificates of Authority to Release (CATR). No product is accepted into integration testing and deployment without CATR. Work is proceeding on a new international standard for this field.

### **Clinical Risk Minimisation**

Additionally, the safety team is looking at ways in which patient safety problems can be addressed by technology. We currently have projects in the following areas

- Safer prescribing (effective use of prompts and alerts in e-prescribing)
- Safer patient ID (mandating use of NHS number; data standards for wristbands; safer management of blood products using bar coding/RFID)
- Safer handover (development of mandatory datasets for handover within and between NHS Trusts and between Trusts and primary care)

### **Safety Incident Management Process**

NHS CFH has a robust system in place to manage safety incidents. We aim to 'make safe' within 24 hours, agree fixes and workarounds and to learn lessons from what has gone wrong previously.