

GPs receive summaries for discharged stroke patients

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GPs are to receive specialised electronic discharge summaries for stroke patients treated in Manchester Royal Infirmary, thanks to templates developed by two specialist clinicians implemented by Medisec Software.

Consultant stroke physician Dr Ganesh Subramanian and GP Dr Helen Hosker, who has a special interest in older people's service development, devised the specialist discharge summary, which must be completed in its entirety by hospital staff for each patient.

Once complete, the information is tagged and sent in XML format to the patient's practice for manual input directly into the patient record. The information includes details of all tests carried out during the patient's stay in hospital, lifestyle risk factors, the effects of the stroke and feedback from therapists.

Dr Subramanian said: "Stroke patients tend to suffer from multiple health problems and complications, so healthcare professionals and GPs need as much detailed information about them as possible to offer the best quality of care.

"We've developed the most comprehensive template possible to make sure that GPs get the right information; the Medisec software then makes sure they get it in the right format and at the right time."

Dr Hosker explained that the electronic discharge summary was a welcome development for GPs. "In the past, the immediate discharge summaries have been written in haste on multi-layered carbon paper and have frequently been illegible.

"The information they contained was very basic at best and virtually nothing or inaccurate at worst. We have taken over the care of patients who have had a major illness with minimal information - it's been a totally unsatisfactory state of affairs for a long time for both GPs and patients."

Dr Hosker explained that a template using mandatory fields would be more helpful to GPs than the self-selected information that hospital staff used to send across. "This project has given general practice the opportunity to say what we need and to ensure standards are consistently high. Having the computer codes included throughout the document allows doctors to delegate the computer inputting work to other members of the practice team."

Dr Subramanian added: "There is a taciturn recognition that it's worth an extra couple of minutes for the massive improvements in the quality of data provided - and the positive impact on patient care in the wider community."

Medisec have already implemented an electronic referral and discharge system in Countess of Chester Hospital, which links into 33 GP surgeries across north-west England and north Wales. However, the templates differ from the existing system in that they are specific to a clinical discipline.

If the pilot is successful, the special stroke discharge forms will be rolled out to the other sites that use MediSec software. Central Manchester and Manchester Children's University Hospitals NHS Trust is also planning on developing templates for other clinical disciplines, such as cardiology, ophthalmics and diabetes.