Patient care project shortlisted in the Oscars of healthcare

A project to improve patient care and make the best use of scarce nurses has been shortlisted for the Oscars of healthcare.

Nurses, technicians and managers from Leicestershire led the nation in introducing a computerised system for allocating staff to visit patients in their own home.

The result has meant nurses have more time to spend with patients, have less “paperwork” to complete, and are more likely to get ongoing training to keep their skills up to date.

As well as working closely with the designers, staff from Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust, Leicestershire Healthcare Informatics Service, and software developers TPP, organised a national conference to pass on their learning. Colleagues from 38 different organisations from across the country took part.

The project has now been shortlisted for the “Technology and Data in Nursing” category of the prestigious Nursing Times awards. The results will be announced on October 30.
LPT has been shortlisted by the Nursing Times six times in the past five years, and has had the national winner in the associated Student Nursing Times awards.

This project involved introducing the additional software to generate optimum visit lists for the 300 community nurses and community healthcare assistants working across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland. Each list carefully balances a range of factors, including the individual needs of the 9,000 patients, travel distances, the number of staff available, their working hours, and their skill set.

It formed part of a transformation project which has seen staff competencies standardised, new skills for some staff, a reduction in the amount of paper work staff had to complete and increased technology to update patients’ electronic records in their own homes.

The software is called Autoplanner, which developers TPP have added to their SystmOne clinical system.

Rachel Dewar, head of LPT’s Community Health Services, said: “As demand for community nurses continues to grow, it is important that we do all we can, to ensure that we can deliver care in the most efficient way. This work has ensured that we have a clear knowledge of our demand and capacity, and that we can allocate work to nurses fairly, ensuring that they feel supported to care for patients.

“The results have been very positive. Face-to-face patient contact time increased from 31 per cent of nurse time to 71 per cent; we have saved 2.5 hours’ planning time each day in each of the 30 teams; we have saved 12 hours’ per day in clinical staff time; the workload is shared more equitably among staff; it is easier to allocate time for staff training and supervision; staff vacancies have reduced, and the proportion of staff reporting they can complete their workload in their contracted hours has increased. We are sending staff with the right skills to the right patient at the right time.”

Simon Jones, business manager from Leicestershire Health Informatics Service, said: “LHIS worked closely with TPP and LPT on the IT solution to enable the transformation project to achieve right staff, right skill, right place, at the right time.

“Autoplanner takes information entered into the system to generate a plan for that day’s patient visits. Nursing staff were previously undertaking the planning manually.
The benefits delivered in the project have been impressive and we are working with LPT to roll this functionality out to other services.”

Matthew Stickland, senior analyst from TPP, said: “Working with LPT and LHIS on Autoplanner was a fantastic project for TPP. We are delighted to hear about the amazing results in improving nurse contact time with patients and saving planning time for upcoming visits. This is a great example of how technology can assist in transformation - improving patient care, helping frontline staff and reducing costs.”

The software is now being introduced to other LPT services which require visits to patients’ homes, including continence, phlebotomy and to the service provided by our 22 volunteer drivers who make 6,000 journeys per year to take patients to and from clinics.

ENDS

NOTES TO EDITORS

- Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust (LPT) provides community health, mental health and learning disabilities services for the one million people living in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland. We have a budget in excess of £278 million and employ approximately 6,300 staff. For more information visit: www.leicspart.nhs.uk. Our registered charity is called Raising Health (charity number 1057361). The charity fundraises to support excellent care initiatives, equipment and innovations which go above and beyond core NHS provision to enhance the experience of our patients, service users and staff. See www.raisinghealth.org.uk
- For further information contact: Brendan McGrath, Communications Manager, Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust, Tel: 0116 295 0801, Email: Brendan.mcgrath@leicspart.nhs.uk.