

Walsall and Hull Launch Mainstream Deployments of Telehealth for People with COPD and Congestive Heart Failure

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Walsall and Hull have announced the launch of large mainstream deployments of telehealth to monitor people with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and congestive heart failure (CHF) in their own homes.

Both Primary Care Trusts are using Genesis monitors from leading telehealth and telecare specialist Tunstall to ensure best use of healthcare resources, reduce COPD and CHF related hospital admissions, support independent living and deliver an improved quality of life for patients.

COPD kills 30,000 people every year in England and Wales alone, making it the fifth biggest killer, and the cost to the NHS of treating COPD is high, at £818 million per annum.

The cost to Walsall PCT for each patient admitted to Accident and Emergency can be as high as £2,300, and it is hoped that the telehealth solutions from Tunstall will prevent hundreds of avoidable admissions, by providing a more timely and preventative model of care. Previous research has shown that the use of Genesis monitors can reduce the need for hospitalisation by over 50% and for emergency care visits by nearly two thirds.

Tony Diaram, Project Manager at Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council said: "This telehealth project will give patients truly person-centred care, helping them to manage their condition and avoid the constant cycle of hospitalisation. By letting patients monitor their own vital signs from home, the Tunstall Genesis units support greater independence and encourage better self-management of COPD, especially within hard to reach communities."

Remote monitoring will also enable Walsall PCT to deploy healthcare resources effectively, and enable community matrons to manage their time and caseloads more effectively.

The telehealth programme being run by Hull PCT in partnership with the University of Hull, Hull City Council, Hull Churches Home from Hospital voluntary organisation and Hull and East Riding Hospitals NHS Trust is using Tunstall Genesis units to let people monitor their own weight and blood pressure daily.

Professor of Cardiology John GF Cleland is leading the Telehealth programme following on from a previous home monitoring study called the Trans-European-Network Home Monitoring Study (TEN-hms)*. The unit also prompts the patient to answer a set of clinical questions, to help accurately gauge the status of their condition. These key CHF indicators are then automatically relayed to staff from the PCT over the user's telephone line.

This approach enables daily accurate monitoring without needing the person to visit their GP and helping to avoid hospitalisation, while notifying staff if early medical intervention or assistance is needed. The telehealth service will also help reduce patients' stress levels, which are a contributing factor to the condition, as it keeps them in a comfortable and familiar environment.

Clare Brown, Locality Manager for Hull City council's Community Care services and Telecare Project Lead commented: "Our telehealth initiative will make a real difference to the lives of people with CHF. Previously, during acute phases of CHF, we would often have to hospitalise patients for long periods to simply monitor their condition, when they were in fact well enough to be at home – but no monitoring solution was available.

"The Tunstall Genesis monitors allow us to track a patient's condition closely while they remain in their home, which is proven to help their well-being, yet we can still react quickly if their condition worsens. It truly is a win-win situation for both

the patients and the PCT.”

The telehealth solution is provided to patients at home by healthcare professionals to deliver more proactive and preventative levels of care for conditions such as COPD, diabetes and congestive heart failure. The monitor allows patients to measure their own weight, heart rate, blood oxygen levels, blood pressure and glucose levels. It can also ask a range of clinical and educational questions in one of 11 languages that primarily aim to further determine a patient’s condition.

As a result, if patients with chronic conditions experience a change in their health status, proactive medical intervention can take place. The Genesis equipment is part of a wider ranging Telecare and Telehealth programme within Hull. With the support of Hull Churches Home from Hospital service, it is a unique mix of technology with the right support when needed to help people to live as independently as possible, without having to reach a critical stage before intervention.

Louis AA, Balk AHMM, Janssens U, Cleland JGF. Telemonitoring for patients with heart failure at high risk for readmission and death. The Trans-European Network Home Monitoring Study (TEN-HMS). Eur J Heart Failure 2003;145

For more information about Tunstall’s telehealth technology and solutions, visit www.tunstall.co.uk/health

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Tunstall is the market leading provider of telecare and telehealth solutions, with over 2.5 million users globally. Tunstall’s solutions support older people and those with long-term needs, to live independently, by effectively managing their health and well-being. Tunstall provides technology, expertise and advice to millions of people enabling them to lead independent more fulfilling lives. For more information on how telecare and telehealth can improve quality of life, visit www.tunstall.co.uk

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