Information technology: record attendance for user group meeting

Recently, The Belfry played host to the CliniSys national conference and user group meeting, which saw record attendance from over 60 trusts around the country. Spread over two days, it brought together experts to debate transformational change and the role of IT in enabling networks.

This year's CliniSys National Conference and User Group meeting was opened by Steven Yates (registered manager, Southwest Pathology Services [SPS] and User Group chairman). Steven began his introduction with an overview of the joint venture between the two foundation trusts of Taunton and Somerset and Yeovil District Hospital with Integrated Pathology Partnerships (iPP). He explained that while SPS will initially focus on providing services to both trusts, the joint venture has been deliberately structured in a way that allows other trusts in the region to join the collaboration and benefit from investment in the new service and the wide range of innovations and service improvements it will deliver. He also outlined that SPS will need to listen and respond to the needs of commissioners and service users, embrace and drive forward with change and ongoing service improvement, and move towards an integrated IT solution that addresses the challenges of cross organisational patient identifiers, supports care pathways spanning all care settings, and facilitates process optimisation and operational efficiency. He warned of the potential dangers of an IT explosion in middleware to support multiple systems communications, and the ongoing challenges and costs associated with keeping everything aligned and updated.

The Belfry in the West Midlands played host to this year's CliniSys National Conference.

PATHOLOGY TRANSFORMATION AND NETWORK DEVELOPMENT

Steven then handed over to Fiona Pearson (CEO, CliniSys), who explored with the audience the drivers for change and the significant increase in pathology transformation and network development activities among prospective and existing users. She considered the increasing need to be able to support the 'business' of pathology effectively, through true appreciation of costs, effectively monitoring and managing process efficiencies and service level agreements, securing and maintaining competitive advantage, and delivering quality services that meet the needs of service users and those of the patient. She outlined the comprehensive 'end to end' solution offering available through the company, highlighting its potential to be expanded into a full customer relationship management tool. The recognised requirement for a scalable, highly available and interoperable core laboratory information management system (LIMS) in developing hub-and-spoke networks are fundamental design foundations of the company's WinPath Enterprise (WPE) system. Fiona also outlined how the business has responded to the bar being raised in areas such as information governance and security, advances in standards and terminology such as the National Laboratory Medicine Catalogue, and in service and account management.

DEVELOPING A SUCCESSFUL NETWORK

In wrapping up her introduction, Fiona handed over to Dr Ian Fry to illustrate how Surrey Pathology Services is developing its network and how it is working in partnership with the company to align IT and service consolidation. Ian began his presentation with a thought-provoking image of a predatory

spider on its web, to illustrate that some pathology service providers appear to live in fear of being taken over and consumed by the larger service organisations in their area.

Ian went on to deliver a strong message that through partnerships with complementary values, strategy and vision, a successful network can be developed and managed to deliver benefit to all stakeholders. Establishing an agreed governance model was considered a key requirement for success, as was strong leadership, drive and commitment. Ian highlighted a number of priorities which he considered fundamental to developing a successful network, which also included:

- the need to have and share a clear vision and strategy for the service
- the need to appropriately train and develop staff
- the need to specify and align IT requirements and delivery phasing
- to ensure clarity and communication between providers and purchasers
- to be able to adapt service delivery models to changing market demand
- to maximise appropriate use of technology
- to establish a new culture.

In conclusion, and before handing over to Phil Hudson, Ian reinforced the key steps from understanding customer and market requirements through to delivering against a sustainable plan.

LEAN AND PROCESS OPTIMISATION
After brief consideration of the various types of network model, Phil involved the audience in a quick show of hands to get a feel for the extent of their involvement in network activity and the level of network maturity. Although over 70% of the audience were involved in discussion and consideration of potential network and service transformation models, only around 15% were actively part of a managed pathology network with a single agreed management and governance structure.

Phil, in his usual entertaining and thought-provoking way, challenged the idea that the formation of hub-and-spoke pathology networks is the only way to deliver the mandated cost savings and improved efficiencies, and shared experiences of some of the good work that has been done on Lean and process optimisation and the positive impact that the *Modernising Scientific Careers* (MSC) programme will have on future service provision. This provided a topical handover to Sarah May (IBMS Deputy Chief Executive), who provided an update on the MSC project.

MODERNISING SCIENTIFIC CAREERS
Sarah began her presentation by considering the justification for the MSC project, and summarised the IBMS position. She highlighted the fact that the IBMS, as the majority professional group in healthcare

The audience comprised representation from over 60 trusts around the country.

science, is responding proactively to the changing workforce and service needs, and went on to consider the role of the science technician in pathology, the roles of assistant practitioners and associate practitioners through to healthcare science practitioners, healthcare scientists and consultants.

Sarah shared some of the aims for biomedical science, including the desire to standardise training, qualifications and competences, and to secure professional ownership of the entire biomedical science workforce. Her concluding observations were that there will probably be a smaller number of biomedical scientists working alongside a larger number of biomedical support workers servicing an increasing user demand, and that a meaningful, regulated career pathway in pathology is essential for safe service delivery.

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP
John Matthews (chief information officer, The Doctors Laboratory [TDL]) then steered the meeting back to the subject of transforming and enabling pathology services through partnership. Following a brief overview of TDL and the Sonic Healthcare group, he explored some key highlights of the Carter report and demonstrated how these have been delivered through partnership with TDL. Key focus was given to the complementary skills, experience and expertise TDL can bring to a pathology partnership in terms of medical leadership, integrated IT solutions, proven pathology networks, dedicated logistics, sample tracking, quality management and point-of-care solutions.

'The idea that the formation of hub-and-spoke pathology networks is the only way to deliver the mandated cost savings and improved efficiencies was challenged'

UPDATED CATALOGUE
Professor Gifford Batstone (Department of Health Informatics Directorate) provided the final presentation of the first day's programme, and gave an update on the National Laboratory Medicine Catalogue (NLMC) and plans for its adoption. Reporting that reference to the NLMC had been made twice in the Department of Health Information Strategy, *The Power of Information*, he confirmed that the catalogue now covered all orderable requests and the majority of reportable tests. The transition from the Pathology Bounded Code List (PBCL) to SNOMED-CT is progressing well and work is being done with the successor body to the Information Standards Board to ensure national and international alignment. Professor Batstone went on to outline plans for the completion of the catalogue and its ongoing management and mentioned early opportunities to pilot the catalogue in north-east London with Barts Health NHS Trust and CliniSys.

DISCIPLINE-SPECIFIC SESSIONS
Donald Saum (CliniSys business development director) then facilitated a panel discussion between the audience and the speakers before handing back to Fiona Pearson to close the conference session. The second day of the user group meeting was given over to presentation and demonstration of new and innovative solution and service offerings from CliniSys. This was followed by concurrent discipline-specific meetings which followed a programme of workshops and discussions to an agenda defined and agreed in consultation with the CliniSys system users. These discipline-specific sessions also saw keynote speakers from organisations such as NHS Blood and Transplant (NHSBT), the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) and the Health Protection Agency (HPA), who gave in-depth presentations on a vision of the future for integrated transfusion services; SABRE – IT incidents and their management; and the future development of electronic laboratory surveillance systems, respectively. ∎