Website saves NHS ‘millions’

A study has found that the NHS Choices website has saved the health service "millions of pounds" a year.
There were over 100 million visits to the site in 2010, which represented an increase of 10% for visits in the previous year.
The NHS Choices site allows patients to find out more information about their symptoms and suggests treatment options.

A different study by Imperial College London revealed that 70% of patients made use of the internet in order to look for data about their condition. Of this number, one third made the decision not to visit their GP.
The study showed that a decrease in needless appointments in young patients could result in a saving of around £44 million annually.
The NHS Choices report said around 19 million people visited the site to find out more about swine flu and there were an average of 200,000 visits per day.
Health minister Simon Burns said: “Every day we use the internet and technology to organise our lives, and increasingly when it comes to our health. For example, more and more people are taking the information they have found online with them when they consult their GP.”
“It is important they can find accurate, trusted information from sources such as NHS Choices.”

Nursing union warns of job cuts

Nurse leaders have warned that up to 27,000 NHS posts are under threat across the UK.
The Royal College of Nursing warns the health service faces a period of job cuts, clogged hospital wards and rising waiting times.

With so many jobs under threat, the RCN is concerned that services will suffer and said patients should be concerned about the future of the NHS.

While protected from cuts in the recent spending review, the NHS is to get only 0.1% annual rises for the next four years after inflation.

RCN general secretary Peter Carter said: “Right now, staff are not only concerned about losing their jobs, they are concerned about keeping services open and how they will cope if they stay.

“The public should be really concerned about the potential impact to the NHS.

I predict waiting will rise. It won’t be too long before people start asking what is going on.”
The warning comes as one trust, South West Essex Primary Care Trust, is extending waiting times for routine operations as part of a £56m turnaround programme and has announced more than 200 job cuts with more to come.

Shadow health secretary John Healey described the RCN report as “an early warning of the strains that the NHS is under”.

NHS chief executive Sir David Nicholson said staffing was a matter for local trusts but added: “We have made it clear that efficiency savings must not impact adversely on patient care, and that every penny saved must be reinvested in support of front line services and improving quality.”
Trainee doctors ‘not supervised’

A review team has found that some trainee doctors working in the NHS do not have adequate supervision. The inquiry looked into the work of junior doctors across England and in one example heard about a trainee being left in charge of 100 patients overnight and at weekends. The review into how young doctors spend their first two years in the NHS said the issue must be urgently addressed with health secretary Andrew Lansley asking for quick action on the report.

Seven wards to close at trust

The Barking, Havering and Redbridge Hospital Trust in east London is planning to close the equivalent of seven wards to get back into financial balance. The trust was given £3.2m earlier this year by NHS London’s challenged trust board to help fund changes which will enable ward closures and has already managed to close one ward by setting up two dedicated elderly care units. The trust said the ward closures had been agreed with local commissioners on the basis that delayed transfers of care were reduced to 1% from the current 5-6%.

McKesson InterQual for East Midlands

The NHS East Midlands Procurement and Commissioning Transformation has chosen InterQual by McKesson to give support to the area’s hospitals and trusts.

Peter Huskinson, director of commissioning services at EMPACT, said: “InterQual can be transferred and utilised across the whole care spectrum providing powerful information to the commissioners of today and the GP commissioners of the future. We aim to have a continuous workflow of patient-level data to support clinical decision making and ensure each care setting is appropriate to the individual patient.”

Free digital dictation for any NHS trust

The managing director of company Dictate IT has offered to give any NHS Trust free digital dictation services. Mark Miller, managing director of Dictate IT, told E-Health Insider: “Dictate IT will make an offer to English NHS trusts where we will provide the platform and technology for digital dictation for no money, and will install and maintain at cost. The NHS has to deliver £20 billion in efficiency savings and transcription services are one of the few areas that can really deliver big savings from back office functions with no impact on frontline services.”

London hospital defends hotel decision

University College London Hospitals has said its use of a local hotel to provide accommodation for cancer patients represented an “outstanding and cost-effective service”. The trust allows patients who require daily treatment to stay in the four-star Grafton hotel at a cost of £120 a night because it is less expensive than providing a bed at the hospital for them. Fiona McEvoy, of The Taxpayers’ Alliance, said she found it “astonishing that it costs more to put people up in a bed on a ward on the NHS than in a flash hotel in central London”.

Memory foam floors trial at hospitals

The University of Portsmouth is conducting a study into the effectiveness of shock absorbent flooring to help reduce serious injuries to elderly patients. The flooring, more commonly found in sports halls, has a memory foam backing with shock absorbing properties but could have benefits in a hospital setting. St Mary’s Hospital, Isle of Wight, York Teaching Hospital, Harrogate District Hospital and Ellesmere Port Hospital are trialling the material with figures suggesting that falls were the leading cause of death in people over 75.

NHS needs to use high speed networks

A question time session at the eHealth Insider Live 2010 heard that the N3 network is stifling innovation, preventing information sharing, and addressing fundamentally the wrong security issues within the NHS. A panel which included Brian James, chief executive of The Rotherham NHS Foundation Trust, Joanne Shaw, chair of NHS Direct, and Andrew Haw, chief information officer of Circle Health, discussed the issues and felt that the NHS needs to start using the same high speed networks as the rest of the world.

CNO role could be removed

Nurses have called for the government not to scrap or change the chief nursing officer position after Dame Christine Beasley retires next year.

University College London Hospitals Foundation Trust’s outgoing nurse director Louise Boden said: “Nursing is too important to the economy, and too embedded in the British psyche and consciousness, to be left to individual hospitals.”

Fit notes are not beneficial

Findings contained in the latest Health of the Workplace Report from Aviva UK has indicated that GPs are unconvinced of the benefits of issuing patients with fit notes. The new survey showed that 68% do not believe they will cut absence levels, and almost two-thirds feel ill-equipped to provide them and that since its introduction in April, enthusiasms for the scheme has diminished. Of 200 GPs surveyed, 68% said they did not believe fit notes would be effective in cutting absence levels, compared to 54% last year prior to their introduction.