

Adastra Helps Out of Hours with Swine Flu Pandemic

Issue Date: 7th August 2009

Despite a tenfold increase in workload amongst the UK's unplanned care providers, caused by the swine flu pandemic, users of the Adastra patient management system are coping exceptionally well.

Liz Gallagher, Director of Operations at North Staffordshire Urgent Care (NSUC), told us, *"We use Adastra Call Handling and Case Management in conjunction with an algorithm supplied by the Department of Health. All calls go into a Doctor Triage Queue and we prescribe Tamiflu based on the algorithm. We have seen weekend call volumes equal to our busiest Christmas period at what should be the quietest time of the year. We are familiar with adjusting quickly to sudden surges in demand and I am very pleased that we are coping exceptionally well. We have also received great feedback from the local GPs working within the OOHs setting who have commented on our ability to adapt on an almost daily basis to the changing environment and translate this into workable operational processes that they can follow which has removed the pressure and provided the clarity they require."*

Swine flu, a respiratory disease caused by a strain of the influenza type A virus known as H1N1, has spread across the world since emerging in Mexico and is now officially the first flu pandemic for 40 years. In England, the number of people with swine flu symptoms who have consulted their GP is now equivalent to a serious bout of seasonal flu during the winter months. The Department of Health says figures are expected to continue to rise and will probably peak in the autumn and winter.

Dr Alex Yeates, Medical Director for Adastra Software Ltd, said, *"It is the robust design and flexible nature of the Adastra application that is allowing our healthcare customers to manage this rapidly increasing workload. My medical team are on top of the application flows within Adastra ensuring our algorithms always follow current expert medical advice. The call flows have been updated four times in the last month to reflect the most recent changes."*

So far no extra funding has been allocated for healthcare providers to cope with the increasing workloads they are encountering due to the swine flu pandemic. Adastra users are finding that the IT infrastructure they already have in place with their Adastra system gives them everything they need.

The Adastra system is helping healthcare providers cope with the swine flu pandemic in a number of ways. As the significant numbers of additional episodes being presented daily relating to swine flu are increasing rapidly, the system enables flexibility and call flow configurability.

Terry Peate, General Manager, Badger Group told us, *"Back in early May we dealt with a swine flu outbreak at a local primary school which had 64 confirmed cases. The Health Protection Agency asked us to help manage the situation by taking swabs from over 500 children and providing the anti viral medication for those who needed it. Adastra is the software we use to manage our 'Out of Hours' services; during and since the school outbreak the Adastra system has helped us in many ways. For example we were able to send out all swab results to GPs via the Adastra system very quickly and efficiently, saving lots of time. The Primary Care Trust often calls on us to help them out in difficult situations like this one because we have a solid infrastructure and we are set up to cope with the extraordinary. Since then we have been*

able to set up the necessary flu lines and flu services for our patients generally with as little as 72 hours notice using Adastra and it has worked extremely well. We have our own flu workflow and Adastra put it in place for us allowing us to code swine flu calls by 'call type' which has enabled us to identify them separately and report accurately to the PCT on our swine flu activity."

Adastra users are able to quickly identify those patients presenting with flu-like symptoms so that they can manage them quickly and appropriately. Once in the system, Adastra flags up these patients so the healthcare provider can make sure potentially infectious patients are kept away from other patients with more serious medical conditions, this is key in preventing the unnecessary spread of the disease.

The National Pandemic Flu Service, a phone and internet service, has been launched in England. It is the latest move in the government's fight against swine flu. It uses a checklist to diagnose whether people have swine flu and can then give them access to anti-flu drugs if necessary. However, Pregnant women, children under one and people with underlying health conditions are all still being advised to contact their own GP or their GP Out of Hours services when surgeries are closed.

Dr Chris Bastin, Medical Director for Devon Doctors said, *"The national flu line appears to be having an effect as we have seen that the rate of increase in our call volumes have slowed this last weekend. This leaves our services clearer so that patients who have underlying healthcare problems and are concerned they might have swine flu can reach us more easily. We have treated a number of patients with severe lung conditions who have needed antibiotics as well as the Tamiflu. The national flu line is set up to handle straight-forward cases and gives access to anti virals. We use Adastra to manage our entire service; it copes with more complex medical conditions so is vital for us in a situation like this!"*

Dr Alex Yeates of Adastra added, *"It is important to realise that our customers still have to deal with their normal, demanding workload during these exceptionally busy times. They often have to cope with very busy Christmas and bank holiday periods and so have the infrastructure and expertise already in place to cope admirably. They deserve a huge pat on the back for their foresight and professionalism, all they need now is additional funding for the extra clinical resources they are going to need to continue to cope with this pandemic longer term."*

Jim Chase, Managing Director, Adastra Software Ltd, said, *"The good news is that the software, which has been designed to manage large numbers of patient calls and perform efficiently during intensely busy periods, is in place across 95% of the UK's out of hours healthcare services. This means technology-wise most of the Out of Hours care providers in this country are geared up to cope very well with the increased levels of patient activity, that experts are saying is looking likely when the swine flu pandemic peaks in the autumn and winter months!"*

Press Release Ends

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