

**PRESS RELEASE**

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## **COPD service first to use telehealth screening COPD patients and reduce hospital admissions**

Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust's and Heatherwood and Wexham Park Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust's integrated Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) service has reduced unplanned hospital admissions by 25 per month and saved nearly £1million by introducing telehealth. The service is the first in the country to use telehealth to screen COPD patients.

The COPD service, which operates in east Berkshire, has undertaken a year-long telehealth study as part of a new admission avoidance initiative, which is offered in addition to an existing early supported discharge service.

The results of the study show that on average, 25 admissions to hospital are avoided every month, saving approximately 1800 bed days a year and equating to a financial saving of £900,000 in 12 months<sup>1</sup>. Furthermore, the team of community and acute healthcare professionals have found improved self-management among COPD patients who use the telehealth system.

"Telehealth is helping to reduce the number of hospital admissions for our patients as it enables early reporting of exacerbation symptoms," explained Joanne King, COPD advanced nurse practitioner. "We are also finding that our patients are becoming better educated about their condition because they have a regular reminder of the symptoms they need to look out for. As a result, they are more confident at self-managing their condition and are providing us with the right information much more quickly when we do call them."

Sixty five patients known to the COPD service consented to and enrolled on the study. The Interactive Voice Response System (IVRS) from Message Dynamics calls the patients twice a week and asks them five questions set by the service about their respiratory symptoms. The patients then use the telephone keypad to answer the questions and the information from the clinical assessment is sent back to the team at their base in King Edward VII Hospital in Windsor. On average five of the 65 calls result in an alert, of which one or two require a home visit by a member of the team.

The study records how many alerts are triggered, the number of contacts per patient following the alerts, what treatment was initiated and the consequence of the episode i.e. admission avoided or admission to hospital. Prior to the introduction of IVRS to the admission avoidance service in

September 2011, 14 admissions were avoided on average each month. With the development of the service and the introduction of IVRS the service has avoided circa 300 admissions in the past 12 months, nearly double the total number of admissions avoided between October 2010 and September 2011.

Added Pam Marriner, respiratory physiotherapist: "IVRS compliments the admission avoidance service. It has been well-received by patients and has led to increased reporting and more effective use of specialist resources. The cost savings are significant when you consider the annual cost for the team is approximately £130,000."

The COPD service is currently seeking funding to continue and expand the use of IVRS.

***Ends***

**For more information and to arrange interviews contact:**

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**Notes to editor**

1. <sup>1</sup> based on the mean average hospital length of stay of six days and the mean average cost of an admission for a COPD patient not requiring NIV or intubation of £3000.
2. Figures are based on analysis by the COPD service. An independent review will be conducted by University of Buckingham, with result expected later this year.
3. The Interactive Voice Response System (IVRS) pilot has been funded by NHS South of England Strategic Health Authority.
4. Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust (BHFT) was created in 2001, bringing together services from across Berkshire. On 8 April 2011, the Community Health Services from Berkshire East and Berkshire West became part of BHFT. We provide care across the county for people with mental health problems and physical conditions, and for some people with learning disabilities. We offer services for children and adolescents, working age adults and older people. Care is provided mainly through community teams who offer treatment and support through a range of services. In-patient services across the county are provided in a number of community hospitals.
5. Heatherwood and Wexham Park Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust provides hospital services to a large and diverse population of over 450,000 which includes Ascot, Bracknell, Maidenhead, Slough, south Buckinghamshire and Windsor. The Trust provides medical, surgical and outpatient services from two main hospital sites at Wexham Park in Slough and Heatherwood in Ascot and employs approximately 3,200 members of staff. The Trust also manages outpatient services in Windsor, Maidenhead, Bracknell and Chalfont St Peter, and runs a breast screening and diagnostic service and chest clinic at King Edward VII Hospital.