



CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY

Polycom® Videoconferencing and BT Helps The Greater Midlands Cancer Network Save Over £30,000 Every Month Whilst Improving Patients Care.

Industry

- Healthcare

Daily use

- Viewing specimens and MRI scans
- Sharing scans, X-rays, and medical images as well as discussing things face to face without leaving the workplaces

Solution

- For Greater Midlands Cancer Network, HD Video Conferencing is essential to day to day life.

Results and benefits

- Improved communications
- Faster decision making
- Reduced costs

Synopsis

The Greater Midlands Cancer Network (GMCN) saves approximately £400,000 a year in doctor travel expenses and productivity savings by utilizing Polycom® RealPresence® Room Solutions to assist doctors and specialists to share scans, X-rays, and medical images and discuss diagnoses and treatments face to face, without leaving their workplaces. The GMCN aims at a £1 million annual saving by boosting videoconference usage even further.

Overview

The Greater Midlands Cancer Network (GMCN) cares for patients across a sizeable territory stretching from Shropshire, Staffordshire, and the Black Country to parts of Powys. This includes eight primary care trusts, a Welsh local health board, seven acute trusts, and six hospices.

Several times a week, teams of oncologists, radiologists, surgeons, and pathologists meet. They review patients' cases together, exchanging information and collaboratively planning the best possible treatments. These multidisciplinary team meetings (MDTs for short) are part of the collective approach to patient care at the heart of the Improving Outcomes Strategy (DoH, 2011).

Challenges

An important part of the Improving Outcomes Strategy and Improving Outcomes Guidance was to further enhance the use of MDT's by creating Specialist Multidisciplinary team meetings (SMDT's) and meet more regularly to review patient care needs. This initiative would involve clinical staff from specialist centres being involved in the meeting along with the clinical staff from the local hospitals.

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Stuart Babiy, Information & Audit Lead, Greater Midlands Cancer Network

Because of long distances between hospitals, members found they were spending as much time getting to SMDTs as they were in the meetings themselves. A 30-mile round trip for each person became the norm and this was seen as time consuming, frustrating and costly. Cutting out the requirement to travel to patients could save around £9,000 a month. Patients would also miss out because the specialists would have fewer hours free for clinics, ward rounds, and hands-on care which adds additional cost in terms of care and productivity. In addition hospitals faced large bills for fuel and fares as travel costs alone were considerable; in the tens of thousands of pounds per annum.

Implementation

What was needed was a simple way for specialists to see and share scans, X-rays, and medical images as well as discussing things face to face, but without leaving their workplaces. BT Conferencing were commissioned to join the brainstorming from day one to ensure they fully understood GMCN's needs. The consultation led to the deployment of High Definition conferencing through Polycom® RealPresence® Room Solutions, (HDX® 8000) due to its lifelike voice and video quality, secure The True Evaluation fullmotion content sharing and built-in network-optimising technology.

Stuart Babiy, Information & Audit Lead for the Greater Midlands Cancer Network, explains: “The BT people recommended Polycom because they understood that we needed very high quality images – technician quality – for viewing things like specimens and MRI scans.” Polycom met another essential need too: the capacity for a large array of equipment plug-ins from microscopes and laptops to document cameras.

The team has found it easy to add videoconferencing to its existing systems. There are 16 dual-screen HDX® 8000 video points across GMCN sites, connected together by the broadband N3 Wide Area Network. Two screens mean that the 20 or so participants at each specialist MDT get the complete picture, just like an in-person meeting. They can see their colleagues at other locations on one screen, while images, documents and presentations are displayed on another at the same time.

Results

Specialists are now making decisions faster and improving efficiency. Speed's important in most businesses but critical in healthcare where timely diagnoses and treatments can mean the difference between life and death. And everyone finds the Polycom system easy to use. Stuart says: "The consultants' time is very precious. If it wasn't working for them, they wouldn't use it."

Patients gain because medical teams can devote more time to them. The budgets of the local hospitals gain too. Stuart estimates it's saving around £9,000 in travelling expenses every month, add this to the estimated £25,000 savings per month in productivity savings and that already adds up to about £400,000 a year. And it's still early days. Right now 11 specialist MDTs use videoconferencing each week: using about 10 per cent of the total time available for video conferenced meetings. GMCN has in its sights a £1 million annual saving by boosting that occupancy even further.

"We needed to bring in clinical inputs from other areas and set up specialist multidisciplinary teams. But the amount of time and cost spent in travelling to attend meetings was astonishing. So we chose to commission BT video conferencing. We wanted added meetings without added costs."

Stuart Babiy Information & Audit Lead Greater Midlands Cancer Network

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