



HealthLink

The National HealthLink Project

.....SERVING GENERAL PRACTITIONERS NEEDS

Volume 1, Issue 1

August 2006

Statistical Update August 28th 2006

No. of GPs using
HealthlinkOnline:
504

No. of Practices:
261

No. of Practice Staff:
602

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Introduction

We are delighted to introduce the first newsletter with a particular focus for the Practice Management Suppliers. It is hoped that this will become a regular feature of Healthlink with possibly a twice-yearly publication initially. All feedback and input from you is most welcome.

The newsletter will be a means to communicate with you on the changes that are taking place within Healthlink, the developments underway, the new connections and update you on our latest statistics. We would hope that this could be distributed amongst your staff to create a greater awareness of Healthlink.

HSE / Hospitals Update

The existing hospitals supplying Healthlink with messages are:

- **HSE MW – Limerick Regional, Ennis General, St Joseph's Nenagh**
- **The Mater Hospital**
- **Beaumont Hospital**
- **St James's Hospital**

A number of new connections have been added to the Healthlink portfolio this year including:



Connolly Hospital – At present GPs in the catchment area are receiving Biochemistry and Haematology result messages from here via Healthlink Online. It is

hoped to deliver Micro results to the GPs before the end of the year. Connolly Hospital went live in June 25th 2006. New users are being recruited in this area at present.



St Vincent's Hospital – On 24th July 2006, GPs in the catchment area began receiving Lab results live from St Vincent's Hospital. The disciplines include Biochemistry, Microbiology, Haematology and Endocrinology. New users are being recruited in this area at present.

A number of pilot projects are underway also including:

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HSE / Hospitals Update



HSE Midlands – A pilot project is underway within the HSE Midlands involving Mullingar and Portlaoise Hospitals for lab results only. The pilot has gone well and there are nine practices involved including a Primary Care team. A review will take place at the end of September in order to make a decision on the next step. **HSE West** – A pilot project is also underway here involving Merlin Park & UCHG, Mayo General and Roscommon Hospitals for lab results only. At this stage the pilot group is receiving only Biochemistry results regularly. The next stage will see the release of Microbiology and Haematology results sent to the same pilot group. It is hoped that the project will be in a position to move to a 'live' status in October 2006.



THE ADELAIDE & MEATH
HOSPITAL, DUBLIN
INCORPORATING
THE NATIONAL CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

AMNCH – Radiology results are being distributed to the five pilot practices involved in this project. The hospital chose to start with Radiology messages as they already developed an interface to lab results in the Keyweb project some years ago. This is still in use, however does not offer message integration to the Practice Management System.

The Radiology messaging project has some challenges to meet but the stakeholders are all working well to achieve success.



Temple St – Work is underway to begin distributing messages from the National Children's Hospital. The initial messages that will be available include A&E Attendance, Death Notification, Discharge Notifications and OPD messages. It is hoped that lab results will be available later in the year. As Temple St is used by GPs nationwide, it is envisaged that this will bring an increased number of users to Healthlink. This pilot has not begun yet.

As well as all of this activity we are in negotiations with additional sites in relation to getting involved in Healthlink. We are also working with many of our existing sites on new message types and/or improvements to existing message types.

The Healthlink Team

There are five members of the Healthlink Team. They are:

- Gemma Garvan, Deputy Project Manager
 - Orla Doogue, Senior Analyst Programmer
 - Karina Crosbie, GP Liaison & Support
 - Antonio De Melo, Programmer
 - Marie Lalor, Project Manager
- (lalorm@healthlink.doh.ie, ph. 01 8825720)

The National Healthlink Project – the future is bright...

Discussions have taken place with the ICT Directorate of the HSE in relation to establishing Healthlink as the National Messaging Solution for the Irish Health Systems.

www.healthlink.ie

The Healthlink website is constantly updated and can be viewed at www.healthlink.ie It is planned to make our technical documentation available to you on a secure area of the site. The log-in details can be requested by sending an email to info@healthlink.doh.ie.

HealthlinkOnline - Developments

An upgrade to the existing Healthlink Online was carried out in mid July. A number of aspects were enhanced and some new features included. No further development will be done on this version.

Online Lab Ordering & Online Neurology Referral

In particular, the **Online Lab Order** functionality went live for Mater GPs only. This service is now available and is hoped that it will eventually replace the manual order system. It provides great accuracy in the area of patient demographics, emergency contact phone number and clinical details. The interface can also calculate the correct number of specimens to send with the order based on the items ordered. It is also hoped that this message will eventually be integrated into the Practice Management System also providing a complete pa-

tient history for orders placed and results received. There are considerable savings to be made by the hospital also from this project. A number of other hospitals have expressed interest in this project also. Online Lab Ordering was short-listed (from 260 entrants to 1 of 40) for the HSE Innovation Awards. While it hasn't reached the finals the judges commended it in the areas of implementation and partnership. It presented good solid results and showed great potential for replication.

The **Online Neurology** interface was made available to St Vincent's GPs only. This is essentially a Request/Response service between the GP and the Neurologist at St Vincent's Hospital. There is huge potential for this service due to the size of waiting lists for Neurology services and the small number of Neurologist in the country. It is also hoped that this message can be integrated into the Practice

Management System. With only 17 neurologists in this country and waiting lists of around 2 years to see a consultant, this system could be hugely beneficial in cutting out unnecessary visits to the neurologist and reducing waiting times. Furthermore, the system is more 'instantaneous' – giving the GP an immediate answer on a recommended course of action and avoiding situations where a patient may be sent to a neurologist before sufficient information is obtained from the GP. Also, the quick response cuts down on the amount of anxiety suffered by the patient's waiting. It is worth noting that this project has also been selected as a finalist in the HSE Innovation Awards 2006. Out of 260 entrants, the project has been selected as one of 16 finalists. The winner will be announced in October 2006.



Healthlink.NET is now the focus of the development team towards mid 2007. It is hoped that this will provide an improved infrastructure to Healthlink with improved security, web services and many new features some of which have come as suggestions from the users. Testing this new version will require considerable time and working with the suppliers will form a large part of this also.

About Healthlink

Healthlink is an electronic communications project funded by the Health Service Executive. The project was initiated in the Mater Hospital in 1995 but quickly evolved into a national project with the launch of HealthlinkOnline in 2003. Our service is available free of charge to all GPs. Some initial investment is required by Hospitals and Health Areas to become involved.

The objective of the Healthlink project is to implement a prototype healthcare communications network with specific reference to Primary Care Practitioners and acute Hospital and agency relationships, and data exchange.

HealthlinkOnline

HealthlinkOnline is a web-based messaging service which allows the secure transfer of patient information over the internet. The message types available in the HealthlinkOnline system are:

- Laboratory Results
- Radiology Result
- Death Notifications
- Discharge Notifications
- Discharge Summaries
- A & E Attendance Notification
- Waiting List Updates
- OPD Appointment Updates
- Lab Orders & Acknowledgements

These messages are specified in HL7 version 2.4 and formatted in XML version 2.0.

Benefits to General Practice include:

- Reduction in phone calls to hospital lab - time saving
- Reduction in administration (& admin costs)
- Reduction in clerical errors from manually entering data
- Integration with Practice Management Systems



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