

Case Study: Wound Care

Health Call has developed a new Wound Care app which helps district nurses securely share wound images.

Sandra Smyth is a district nurse who helped develop the product in County Durham and Darlington. She works for County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust, working with patients in and around Barnard Castle.

Around 40 per cent of district nurse caseloads is made up of wound management. Prior to using the Health Call Wound Care app, district nurses in County Durham and Darlington were using SystmOne templates to assess and review patients but there was no function to take photographs of wounds.

Background

The wound care product was developed for care homes so that staff there could provide detailed information when referring residents into local NHS community services. It is part of a package of solutions provided by Health Call to provide a digital channel of communication for care home staff to capture clinical information so they can make quality referrals to their local NHS services.

Initially, district nursing teams used the care home version of the app, but this has now been adapted for their purposes and will be rolled out across the county. It means they can now share images within the patient's record with specialists such as tissue viability nurses, GP or surgical teams.

Sandra and her team piloted the service, as an area of the county which covers a large, rural geographical area, being able to share patient information digitally brings benefits to patients and the service.

By being able to capture more detailed information about a patient's wound means that the nurses can triage and treat the patient effectively. It means they know which dressings are required and if other specialists need to be involved.



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Benefits

Sandra said: "When a district nurse goes to see a patient, the image of a wound can be uploaded there and then into SystemOne. We can have a senior clinician review whilst the nurse is with the patient and provide advice on the course of treatment. This is of particular benefit because of our rural location. We can effectively offer a telemedicine service and can avoid the need for repeated visits from different specialists."

Nurses using the service capture key data about the patient. The app mimics the wound care assessment so there is no duplication of data entry but also has the added benefit of being able to take up to four photographs. The photos are taken in app and not stored locally on the device, keeping the data safe.

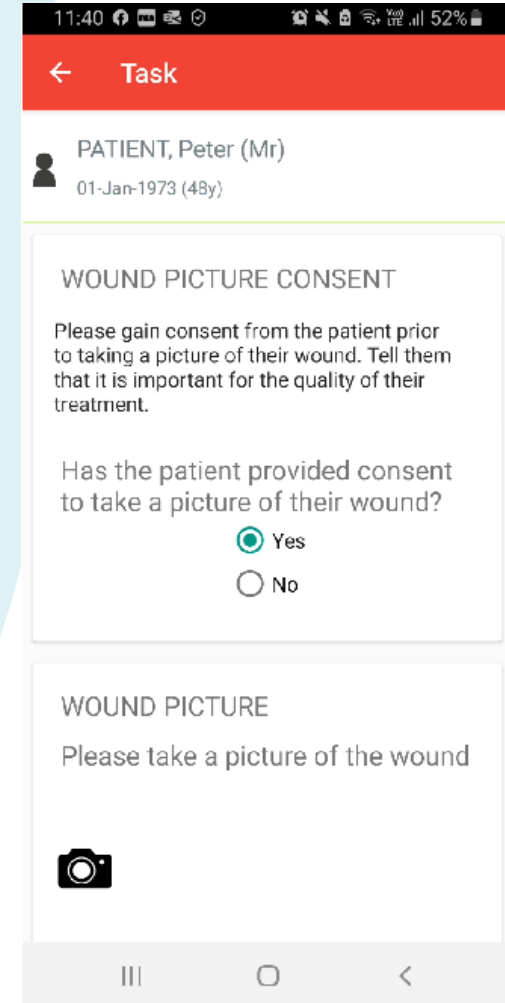
A further benefit to staff is they don't need to use their laptops to complete the assessment – it can all be done using their smartphone. COVID-19 restrictions have meant they don't take their laptops into visits to minimise the risk of cross infection. The phones have robust covers which can easily be wiped down between visits which helps maintain patient safety.

Sandra explains: "This is the first time we have had the ability to take photos which is in line with information governance. Our team use smartphone devices provided by the trust, the image is taken and then uploaded straight into the patient's clinical record and not kept on the local device. So, it's a safe way of

sharing the image."

The quality of the images is good according to Sandra. "We only have very few instances where the image isn't clear. As staff have got used to using the devices, they understand the best distance to hold the phone and use the paper measures provided in the dressing packs to add wound size and perspective to the photograph."

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Multi-disciplinary sharing and learning

Clinical records in County Durham and Darlington are accessed through SystmOne. This means that frontline staff such as tissue viability nurses, dermatologists, surgeons and GPs can all access the images and provide expertise into the patient's ongoing wound care – without the patient having to travel around the county seeing different specialists. The district nurse team sets a future care plan and allocates a follow up visit to a healthcare assistant. The healthcare assistant can go back to the patient at the specified time to provide an updated image of the wound, which can be reviewed by the care team.

Due to COVID-19, the team are not located together. With the wound images, it means that the team can benefit from sharing images using digital technology. Sandra explains: "The images are a great learning tool, I can show the team what a healing wound looks like, what necrosis looks like and offer a senior review on which treatment will have the best outcome for the patient. We can help support each other's development through clinical supervision and improve our understanding of wounds, even when we don't get to see each other as often as before."

Key lessons

Sandra's team are now looking at refining the use of these digital images, looking at the most useful cases and scenarios

when the photographs would be beneficial. For example, at the start or end of any treatment, when collating audit data, when a patient is transferred to another team or as part of rapid reviews or route cause analysis reviews.



Sandra Smyth

Next steps

Currently the service has been piloted in three community nursing teams and the plan

now is to roll it out across teams across the rest of the county. Sandra's team is passionate about using the app and confirms that it makes a real difference to how their team works. "Trying to describe a wound in writing is incredibly challenging, in this case a picture really is worth a thousand words. When we can share the image – it makes all the difference."

