

NHS England - TECS CASE STUDY 002: Florence text messaging to monitor a range of conditions

Location and commissioners: Various

Provider: Stoke-on-Trent CCG & Mediaburst Limited

Ambition levels: 1, 2, 3, 4

Background:

Florence is primarily a text messaging service that links patients' mobile phones to clinicians' computer systems and can be used in almost any healthcare setting. Florence is used in general practice, acute hospital, community and mental health settings, as well as by social care professionals, education and public health. The system is currently used in various health and social care organisations all across the UK. Specific examples are active in West Midlands AHSN / Stoke-on-Trent CCG.

It can be used for any condition where the patient at home might benefit from motivation and prompting; questions or education; or reporting symptoms and home measurements such as blood pressure, weight, oxygen saturation etc. Florence's technology can be linked to a wide range of illnesses and healthy living services including asthma, diabetes, and hypertension, smoking cessation and weight management. It also links with other TECS systems including Interactive Voice Response, smartphone & tablet telehealth systems and various other devices.

How does it work?

Text message service sends information, collects data and links directly to clinician's computer software. The software visualises the data, creates graphs, and tables so that clinicians can easily see the vital statistics on their patients' health. Using collected data, the system can also automatically advise a patient and/or clinician if pre agreed action needs to be taken. The system is also used to remind a patient to take their medication or perform a personal health check eg blood pressure.

What does it achieve?

A typical general practice might have 100 or so patients using the system for various clinical applications. Florence is used in over 70 health and social care organisations. Over 22,000 patients have joined the service.

Developed by the NHS as a simple telehealth application, Florence allows clinicians to engage patients with their own healthcare. This achieves faster health outcomes, better adherence to medication or other treatments, and increased productivity compared with normal care. Harnessing this SMS technology has yielded much better engagement between clinician and patient.

- improved satisfaction with patient / nurse care
- compliance with medication and appointment reminders, reduction in DNA rates
- improved physical health and mental well being
- patient led focus
- patients' lives no longer revolve around provision of services

Financial:

See appendix A

Table 4. Example costing of case study (n=20 patients)		
Resources	Flo service	Usual service
Texts	22 patients x 49 texts @ 8 pence = £86.92	Nil
Loan of sphygmomanometers	£100 towards capital costs for home BP readings	Nil
Initial consultation	Nil extra cost	Nil extra cost
Subsequent consultations (practice nurse acting to practice protocol)	<p>6 – told by phone not hypertensive @ £4.50 (5 mins maximum) = £27</p> <p>4 – repeat exercise in 1 year (so no charge in this year)</p> <p>10 –transferred to next protocol @ £30.24 each for 2 months; then seen by nurse @£9 = £392.40</p> <p>10- ECGs + blood tests @ £9 nurse time + bloods circa £8 each = £170</p> <p>One GP consultation per hypertensive patient pa @£25 (ie x 10) = £250</p> <p>Sub-total = £839.40</p>	<p>Assume that if no Flo available:</p> <p>2 nurse checks for each of the 20 patients with initial high readings @ £9 each = £360</p> <p>Say 18 patients thought to be hypertensive – average x 6 consultations – nurse @ £9 = £972</p> <p>18- ECGs + blood tests @ £9 nurse time + bloods circa £8 each = £306</p> <p>One GP consultation per hypertensive patient pa @£25 (ie x 18) = £450</p> <p>Sub-total = £2,088</p>
Unnecessary medication	Nil	<p>Average cost for 8 patients not hypertensive but falsely classed as being so =</p> <p>£91.20 pa if eg on generic ramipril 2.5mg and no pharmacist cost included</p>
Other healthcare usage –		E.g. fractured hip = acute costs of treating one fractured neck of femur are circa £15,000 – from patient incorrectly classified as having hypertension and thus <u>overtreated</u> so creating

Links to related information on the programme:

- <http://www.getflorence.co.uk/>

- <http://www.theguardian.com/healthcare-network/2013/may/21/telehealth-helps-patients-responsibility-health-wellbeing>
- <http://www.networks.nhs.uk/nhs-networks/simple-telehealth/cpd-programme/cpd-pages/8.-understanding-the-costs-of-flo-telehealth-to-the-nhs-and-potential-savings-in-consultation-times>