

Electronic Patient Record in the North Denmark Region – Three Articles

New Electronic Patient Record in the North Denmark Region off to a Good Start

The North Denmark Region is still resonating from the kick-off of its new electronic patient record – or EPR for short.

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Source: www.rn.dk

An EPR system which will give the Region's doctors and nurses access to comprehensive patient data across clinical systems is to be implemented in all the hospitals in the Region over the next couple of years.

Author: Thomas Nordlund,
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The first place to receive the EPR is the Department of Infectious Diseases at Aalborg Hospital. Initial reactions are positive.

Greater and Faster Overview of Patient Data

For a whole week, doctors and nurses in the Department of Infectious Diseases at Aalborg Hospital were the very first to test the first deliveries of the new electronic patient record.

Chief Consultant in the Department of Infectious Diseases, Dr. Henrik Nielsen, thinks that the EPR offers a much greater and faster overview.

– Previously we had to log into five different systems – one by one, each with a separate password, before we could see all patient data. Now we get the same information with just one login. Once we get more familiar with the system, the EPR will give us an unprecedented overview and save time for everyone.

The chief consultant also believes that EPR will strengthen the dialogue between colleagues across geographies.

– Now we can easily exchange data across locations. I might confer with a colleague over the phone while we both have the patient's data in front of us on the computer screen. That enables us to have a good and informed dialogue in connection with the treatment.

According to the chief consultant this first EPR experience has primarily been positive. Therefore he looks forward to receiving all the EPR deliveries for the department over the next years. Head Nurse Jytta Mølgaard Højsleth shares his anticipation.

– This first version of the EPR is a very user-friendly system with a well-arranged screen layout, which all members of my staff find easy to use. We are naturally impatiently waiting to get the complete EPR, with all the functions built in.

Tight Project Management Using Business Cases

CIO and chairperson of the EPR project steering committee Dorte Stigaard is happy with the start.

– The North Denmark Region is the first region to produce an EPR business case that lists the expected effects of an EPR as well as a number of technical and organisational assumptions. We have followed the recommendations of the Ministry of Finance to use business cases as a case management and evaluation

tool, and as a result we have received the first delivery of a standardised, group-wide EPR which is based on international standards and matches the clinicians' expectations and needs.

– We have succeeded with an EPR strategy which integrates the IT systems that clinicians have used for years. This means that all doctors and nurses with patient contact can seamlessly exchange data across hospitals and professional groups.

The North Denmark Region has in close consultation with clinical representatives chosen to download historical data from the clinical systems to the new EPR. It has been time consuming to transfer the data and ensure that the quality of the data, which dates back to 1975 for some systems, is validated.

– This means that from day one we have a structured record where staff across systems can get an overview of the patient's current and previous healthcare treatments. And I'm obviously relieved and happy about the staff's positive feedback.

– Everything seems to have worked, thanks to a great interdisciplinary collaboration between the IT Department, IT suppliers, and the Department of Infectious Diseases. This successful first EPR launch heralds a new era of smarter IT which will streamline the North Denmark Region's health service – initially for the benefit of the staff.

The CIO also believes that there are a number of benefits in store for the patients.

– The patient will eventually experience a more coherent treatment. Records can be retrieved quickly irrespective of the patient's geographic location. In the long term, EPR will also support treatment packages that shorten the course of treatment. And collecting data in an EPR will automate data capture for research purposes, enabling us to optimise treatment methods in the future. And who knows, maybe a user-friendly EPR will help attract manpower to the region.

Multi-vendor Strategy

The North Denmark Region's new electronic patient record is based on a multi-vendor strategy where the North Denmark Region on the basis of an integration platform provided by CSC Scandihealth A/S creates coherence between clinical systems, and brings together in one user interface a wide range of clinical data which, when viewed in context, is seen as an electronic record that supports patient treatment. Thus EPR offers the clinician one common access to the patient's clinical data – and reduces the need for repeatedly logging in and switching between IT systems.

During the first phase an operational environment and an integration platform have been set up which provide integration to major interdisciplinary systems: x-ray, medication administration, laboratory, microbiology and patient administration systems. Looking forward, the integrations will be expanded to include pathology, blood bank as well as a number of systems from the individual specialties.

The solution will be delivered in lots over the next couple of years where the functionality will be continuously expanded while the three existing patient administrative systems are being phased out. The first two deliveries have just been implemented at the Department of Infectious Diseases. In the next lots the solution will include registration, record keeping and reporting to national authorities.

Additional Information

More information about the North Denmark Region's EPR is available at the project's website: www.epj.rn.dk

It's All on the Screen



Chief Consultant Henrik Nielsen's new best friend accompanies him on his ward rounds. Thanks to the new electronic patient record, a single click of the mouse lets him collect all relevant information about the patient in one screen image - as if by magic. Photo: Niels Meredin.

Department at Aalborg Hospital pilots the transition to electronic records in the entire region – a single click of the mouse enables the doctors to produce all relevant information about a patient – as if by magic.

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Source: www.nordjyske.dk

Author: Mogens Møller

– There you go, young man. Dr. Henrik Nielsen, chief consultant at the Department of Infectious Diseases at Aalborg Hospital, has got a back ache from bending over his new computer when a nurse shows him how to elevate the table.

– That was nice. My back is better already, he exclaims and straightens his back.

The department has been selected to pilot the first attempt at a common electronic patient record in the hospitals in the North Denmark Region. And with the exception of an impending back injury, which a merciful nurse has just prevented, Dr. Henrik Nielsen is basically full of praise for the new acquisition.

– I think it works well. The new electronic patient record shows us the information we know from our usual systems. The major benefit is that we've got it all in one screen image, so we do not have to search for information in different places in the system. That gives us a very fast overview.

The new computer on wheels is the doctors' and nurses' loyal and indispensable companion on the ward rounds. A single mouse-click produces all the information about the patients' blood tests, temperature curves, medication and other relevant things on the screen.

Although the new electronic system offers fast and accurate information, Dr. Henrik Nielsen realises that there are some initial difficulties.

– We are still in the learning phase and all new things take longer for the staff. So we probably haven't experienced all the benefits of the system yet, he claims.

Fairly Well-behaved

According to Dr. Henrik Nielsen the new electronic patient record has behaved more or less as expected. During the first days the information on the screen was presented in a slightly different way than he and his colleagues were used to. But the technicians soon fixed that.

All in all there is a close collaboration between the staff at the Department of Infectious Diseases and the people developing the system. In that way any small glitches are soon fixed.

Until now the patient records at the hospitals in the North Denmark Region have been a combination of paper and electronic data. Thus the Department of Infectious Diseases is the first to completely let go of the paper.

– One of the benefits is that multiple employees can see the same data at the same time although they are at different locations in the hospital, whereas paper must be carried from one place to another. So this is already a great relief, states Dr. Henrik Nielsen.

– Also, we must admit that the odd record has gone temporarily missing throughout the years. This is always very unfortunate in the situation at hand although the record will be found again. Electronic records help us avoid these kinds of incidents so that is also a kind of improvement.

At the same time the chief consultant admits that as hospitals and the community as whole become more and more dependent on computerised systems, we become more vulnerable if the computerised systems fail.

– That is why we set so high standards for operational reliability and the entire IT support underlying the systems. It is crucial – and virtually a matter of life and death here at the hospital – that it works 24/7 – all year round.

Fortunately, so far it is working at the Department of Infectious Diseases.

Electronic Information about All in the Hospitals in the North Denmark Region

NORTH DENMARK REGION: By the spring of 2011 information about all patients in the hospitals in the North Denmark Region will be available in electronic patient records.

Date: 14 June 2009

Source: www.nordjyske.dk

Author: Mogens Møller

CIO in the North Denmark Region Dorte Stigaard ventures almost to promise this.

– We'll probably be spending the next year or so implementing pilot projects. But by the spring of 2011 at the latest we should be ready to roll out the system in the entire region, she says.

Thus the pilot project which has just been launched at the Department of Infectious Diseases at Aalborg Hospitals merely marks the start of a major process which will make relevant patient information much more accessible to doctors and nurses over a period of two years. And in this way save time and energy.

The electronic patient records are – apart from new hospital building projects – the most ambitious and comprehensive project in the relatively short history of the North Denmark Region so far.

DKK 250 million

When the bill is settled in a couple of years, the region will have spent some DKK 250 million on electronic patient records.

Actually the North Denmark Region is a front-runner in Denmark when it comes to electronic patient records. The other regions are somewhat hesitant.

And surely there are some political reservations about the expensive project. Svend Heiselberg from the Liberal Party voted against it when the Regional Council resolved to loosen the purse strings for the project.

Svend Heiselberg estimated that pioneering such a project may prove a lesson that will cost the North Denmark Region dearly. Based on experience from previous IT projects, one of the things he fears is that the North Denmark Region's system may have difficulties working with other national or international electronic systems.

Not Worried

This worry is by no means shared by the region's CIO.

– We have made sure that the electronic system we are getting fully lives up to international standards, she states.

After the promising start of the electronic patient record in the North Denmark Region, Dorte Stigaard is an uncompromising optimist. Even on behalf of the patients.

– The patients may not feel the difference here and now. But in the long term it will definitely result in a more coherent course of treatment – which is clearly a benefit for the patients.