



# NHS cancer director launches new software tool to improve cancer treatment

The Cancer Commissioning Toolkit (CCT) will help drive up the quality of cancer care on a national basis.

The NHS, which is celebrating its 60th anniversary this year, is dedicated to achieving the Government's target of reducing the death rate for cancer by 20% in people under 75 by 2010. That's no easy task. Cancer is a major health issue in the UK; one in three people will be diagnosed with the disease in their lifetime, and one in four will die of it. Over 275,000 people were newly diagnosed with cancer in 2002 and around 150,000 died the same year. But as a result of better focus on prevention and treatment, cancer survival rates are also increasing and there has been an 11% reduction in mortality rates since 1995.

As part of the NHS' original Cancer Plan (2000), a series of cancer 'networks' were set up across England, of which there are now over 30 (see <http://www.cancer.nhs.uk/index.htm>). A cancer network brings together local Primary Care Trusts, in order that commissioning of cancer services may be coordinated across a wider geographical area, as well cancer specialists, health professionals and senior managers involved in the care of cancer patients and their families, therefore enabling a dialogue between commissioners and providers to take place. A network's mission is to achieve better quality treatment and care for cancer patients.

Now these cancer networks have a vital new tool in their mission to develop better ways to fight the disease. As part of the new Cancer Reform Strategy (December 2007), a special piece of software with a web-based front end linked to a database of best practice has been developed. The Cancer Commissioning Toolkit (CCT) is currently being rolled out (summer 2008) and will help NHS managers, specialists in public health, senior staff within networks and clinicians develop better cancer-fighting strategies at a local level, based on national data and standards.

The NHS has already identified the Toolkit as a key weapon in its fight against cancer. 'I am convinced a lot of positive results will flow from the CCT,' says Richard Hancox, Network Director of one of the cancer networks, the Arden Network, based in Coventry. 'I also foresee that the success of the CCT can be built upon in other disease areas in the NHS.'

Development of the CCT was spearheaded by the National Cancer Action Team (NCAT), supported by funding from the Pharmaceutical Oncology Initiative (POI). The POI was set up in 2005 to identify opportunities to collaborate on projects to benefit cancer patients by improving access to cancer medicines. The POI is an industry partnership that involves 18 plus pharmaceutical companies.

## Benchmarking on the dashboard view



## Comparison of elective and non-elective costs by geography and speciality



NCAT and POI selected the management company A.T.Kearney to assist with the design, scope and functionality of the CCT. The analytics and tool development company Concentra was in turn asked by NCAT to detail the design, development, roll-out, training and support of the final version of the CCT.

## WHAT DOES THE TOOLKIT DO?

The main impetus behind the CCT was the need to help cancer networks and primary care trusts commission cancer services more effectively, addressing the Government's vision for 'World Class Commissioning'. ('Commissioning' is an NHS term for planning and purchasing healthcare.) Until recently, while a lot of information on the use of effective cancer drugs and treatments, and other useful data, including cancer service quality indicators such as waiting times etc., was available, it was held in lots of different places, including 15 competing databases, and often in a paper-only format.

The Toolkit is designed to bring all that information together in one place and make it much easier for cancer specialists in the networks, PCTs (Primary Care Trusts) and Hospital Trusts to better grasp the needs of their population, the quality of services provided for cancer patients in their area and to promote discussion and dialogue on the best way forward, e.g. which new drugs to introduce and how.

The CCT brings together all that vital work that had previously only been available in piecemeal fashion to managers on a regional basis, thus giving the health service a much more comprehensive view of cancer across England. It also contributes to greater NHS efficiency, as it allows important activities like checking costs of new medicines to be done just once, which also means greater consistency across the country.

The CCT does this by offering a one stop online library of cancer information and data that makes it much easier for NHS Commissioners (managers) to draw up the cancer plans for their areas. The Toolkit does this by offering easy to use ways to manipulate the highly complex data, e.g. around cancer statistics and treatments and offers a highly intuitive benchmarking capability, especially useful for making sure one region isn't falling behind another, or for tracking when drugs become approved by NICE (National Institute for Clinical Excellence). All of which contributes to greater efficiency and can potentially save 100s of man hours.

The CCT project interlinks with another major cancer response NHS project also developed with Concentra, the C-PORT (Chemotherapy Planning Online Resource Tool).

## CCT - A COMBINATION OF EASE OF USE AND RICH FUNCTIONALITY

The CCT has a number of key features highly relevant to help the NHS find better ways of treating cancer:

- It centralises the information needed by NHS managers and makes it easier to look at regularly updated data in one place
- Data is accessible via a level of detail hierarchies, supporting analysis at very high or very detailed levels (from, for instance, a very global "dashboard" view of central cancer variables at a PCT or cancer network level or local data on length of patient treatment)
- Data on cancer and cancer treatment are presented in an easy to navigate and manipulate graphical manner, making it that much easier to work with key variables
- Managers can look at the differences in groups of information in order to benchmark their organisation's performance relative to others across the NHS

In addition, the Toolkit enables its users to:

- Extract, download and display any data they see in a chart and want to explore and manipulate further
- Work with their preferred settings on the CCT, so they can work with the system the way they want to, such as navigating to the sections most relevant to them or working with information via the 'view' most useful for their specific needs
- Generate quickly and easily a range of reports with selected contents, guidance and charts from different sections of the Toolkit

## HOW CONCENTRA'S EXPERTISE HELPED SECURE LASTING BENEFIT

There are many areas around the development and rollout of the CCT where Concentra's contribution has been significant. One of them was the fact that the design, development and roll-out was completed in a ground-breaking six months. Another has been "usability testing", which formed an important part of the project as the tool had to be easy-to-use and intuitive. 'There was a user acceptance phase designed to make sure that CCT works in the way it is designed to work,' says Hancox. 'It took users who had no experience of using the Toolkit and asked them to navigate their way around it. This ensured that the navigation of the toolkit really was as intuitive as possible, because some people will have a more technical background but some staff will need to use the CCT who don't have these skills.'

Concentra has run a number of formal training sessions which have given every network a 'trained trainer' in the toolkit, so the NHS is able to manage its long-term goals. Also core to this approach, in addition to these formal train the trainer sessions, ten regional CCT roll out events have been supported by the company.

'Concentra has been very valuable in putting together the communication and presentation materials and supporting those events' notes Hancox. 'We had a number of stands available, demonstrating the toolkit – and again Concentra supported these. The demonstrations enabled users to experience the live system.'

## WHAT IS THE CURRENT STATUS OF THE CCT?

The system functionality has already been developed for phase one of CCT. Once a phase of data validation has concluded, the Toolkit will be released to users right across the NHS, which means, in Hancox's words, 'Very soon we can have users utilising the toolkit and validating cancer strategies as a result.' A minimum of 2,500 NHS staff are estimated to use the first release.

## HOW WILL THE CCT HELP THE TREATMENT OF CANCER IN THE UK

'One of the key features of the CCT is that the toolkit is designed around the patient's pathway or journey through treatment,' says Hancox.

'So for each aspect of the patient's journey, there is a chapter, which has a number of sections identifying metrics for each of those areas. That means that, at a glance, managers can get an overview of cancer services for each stage of the patient journey.'

He adds, 'One of the most exciting features of the toolkit is the report writing functionality. The analogy I use is that it is rather like Internet shopping, where you can browse a number of items and "add to basket". As you browse the CCT and review a number of charts that are interesting for you and your locality, you can add these to the report cabinet – and at the end of your review of the commissioning toolkit you can download a report into MS Word, which can be used therefore to take to PCT or network boards. You can also add you own local commentary, or some further information that just gives a richer picture of cancer services in your local area.'

The ability for a Cancer Network or Trust to benchmark their performance against national or similar regional characteristics will also be extremely important as a driver for improved quality across the service, he believes. Another valuable function is the 'dashboard', which allows an at-a-glance view of overall performance at either a Network or PCT level.

## WINNING THE BATTLE

The CCT will soon start providing the NHS' cancer specialists with more tools to fight cancer by improving their decision-making abilities and bringing together commissioning expertise through the guidance contained in the Toolkit. It will also enable those high-performing organisations to be highlighted, supporting the sharing of best practice nationally.

Concentra is extremely proud of its contribution to this vital aspect of health care in the UK and continues to work closely with the NHS cancer bodies to extend and enhance the system to derive maximum lasting value.

## SOLUTION SUMMARY

Concentra has been a major force in the creation of a vital decision support tool helping improve cancer treatment in the UK and addressing the Government's vision for World Class Commissioning. The Cancer Commissioning Toolkit (CCT) aids cancer 'networks' (regional teams in the NHS and affiliated organisations) get data on the best new treatments, benchmark their performance and share vital information. The main users are the managers in Primary care Trusts (PCTs) who will use it to better plan their local cancer treatment strategies, working to national guidelines (contained in the NHS' Cancer Reform Strategy), designed to improve the UK's profile on cancer treatment. The system is going through a final phase of data validation before a national rollout.

### Client Profile

#### Pharmaceutical Oncology Initiative Partnership (POIP)

The POIP was set up to identify opportunities to collaborate on projects to benefit cancer patients by improving access to cancer medicines. The partners that supported the development of C-PORT include the NHS Cancer Action Team, NHS Improvement, Cancer Programme and a group of 12 pharmaceutical companies who research, develop and supply innovative cancer medicines.

**Industry:** Health

**Web:** [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

**Technologies:** Microsoft .Net, Microsoft SQL Server 2005, Internet Information Services 6.0.

### Other healthcare clients include

NHS, Department of Health, Pfizer, Roche, Novo Nordisk, abpi, DeNDRon, Otsuka, Schering-Plough, Nuffield Health and The Society of Podiatrists.

### Why Concentra

Concentra improve and sustain the performance of our clients through business consulting and technology services. We make improvements real by designing, building and implementing solutions to boost profitability, streamline operations, improve collaboration and understand data.



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