

VIDEOCONFERRING; REDUCING CO₂ EMISSIONS, COSTS AND TIME.

Ceredigion & Mid Wales NHS Trust continues to improve operational efficiency, reduce costs and ultimately help tackle climate change by using telemedicine technology.

The Trust has been using videoconferencing for 'virtual meetings' of cancer multidisciplinary teams since 2000, linking with other Team members in specialist Centres eg Swansea NHS Trust.

Videoconferencing technology enables users to hold meetings without all the delegates being in the same room, building, geographical location or even country. A display screen and camera in each meeting room provides an image of those persons attending the meeting remotely and simultaneous verbal communication is maintained using microphones. As well as enabling people from remote sites to meet without leaving their workplace, it offers one main advantage of limiting or removing the need to travel, without detracting from the membership, quality and flow of the meeting.

Since 2000 the use of videoconferencing has increased within the Trust and the South West Wales Cancer Network as a whole and developed to encompass other areas eg palliative care services, following the launch of Ceredigion Telehealth Project in 2004 and South West Wales Cancer Network Telemedicine Project in 2005.

In October 2006, users of the videoconferencing equipment at Bronglais Hospital, Aberystwyth were asked to complete questionnaires quantifying how much time and travel costs had been reduced by attending meetings via videoconferencing versus attending the meeting in person. This survey produced startling results (11,176 miles travelling avoided, over £4,400 saved in travelling expenses and 1696kg of CO₂ avoided).

The survey was repeated in October 2007 and a summary of the results follow:

- Over **90** people used the facilities in October 2007 to attend **30** meetings
- **12,930** miles travelling to meetings in person were saved – which translate into :
- Over **£5,100** being saved in travelling expenses
- The production of **2590kg** of CO₂ was avoided (it would take nearly **48 trees** a year to absorb this much)
- **330** hours of travelling time was avoided
- Staff groups using the equipment included 21 consultants, 13 management, 5 clerical, 30 nursing, 2 pharmacy, 20 therapists and 1 transfusion practitioner. Based on hours saved and percentage of staff groups, this could equate in one scenario to £8,610 of salary not wasted travelling to a meeting.



The survey suggests that utilisation as well as the number of employees taking advantage of the technology has continued to increase since the previous survey, (9 additional meetings and 26 additional members of staff) with a wide range of staff groups using the equipment.

Yet again this year's survey showed that over twelve months there could be a potential saving of £61,200 in travelling expenses. Added to last year's calculated savings, this equates to a total estimated saving of over £114,000 in two years.

Exploiting this technology uses staff time more efficiently, reduces the amount of time spent travelling and assists the Trust in its contribution to reducing climate change by limiting the emissions of CO₂.

Delyth Lewis, Telemedicine Project Manager says "I am very pleased that, through the work undertaken by the Ceredigion Telehealth Board and the South West Wales Cancer Network Telemedicine Programme, that the range of uses for videoconferencing is increasing and that staff are now more confident in using the technology and, with significant potential cost reductions for the Trust, that there is a role for the use of videoconferencing and telemedicine in the future delivery of healthcare".

If you require further information please do not hesitate to contact Delyth Lewis on delyth.lewis@ceredigion-tr.wales.nhs.uk 01970628814.



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