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Using the Latest Web Technologies to Improve Communication and Implement a Cultural Change in Junior Doctors in a Large UK Health Trust

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Abstract

The Internet is universally accepted as a means of communication and is an under used resource within the NHS. We developed a Junior Doctors Website and content management system and in doing so have seen a cultural change in how information is communicated in United Bristol Healthcare Trust

Keywords:
junior doctor, internet, communication

Introduction

United Bristol Healthcare Trust is a large NHS Teaching Hospital Trust. It employs 360 Junior Doctors across 4 different sites. They are employed on a semi-permanent basis and rotate between specialties, hospital sites and other Trusts. A Junior Doctors Committee was formed to represent these Junior Doctors and found significant difficulty in communicating with them. In particular the Trust was unable to disseminate medico-legal information, clinical guidance and Trust news. In turn, Junior Doctors felt unable and unaware of how to feedback problems to the Trust and wanted better access to clinical and career guidance, time management information and social news. The principal reason for the breakdown of communication was a reliance on a Trust e-mail system. Access was only available on-site, limited and slow and relied on Junior Doctors registering and using an account. There was no list of personal e-mail addresses.

With changing work patterns as a result of the European Working Time Directive and less face to face contact within the hospital the need for excellent communication is greater than ever. The internet is universally accepted as a means of communication. Our aim was to develop a Junior Doctors website accessible from work and home. As part of its development it needed to contain useful content to entice continuing and regular use. It required the ability for users with privileges to be able to directly and easily create areas on the site and upload information as and when necessary creating a live system.

Methods and results

We formed a Junior Doctors web development team. 4 members divided responsibilities into content management, technical development, marketing and overall coordination. We initially designed a static HTML site, residing in our Trust intranet. Using Server Side technologies we were able to develop a content management system as well as other interactive aspects including notice boards, timetables and rotas. We used our secure logon system to create a database of Users e-mails to further aid communication.

There were a number of hurdles to overcome to reach this point. We had to engage the IT department and Trust Board to show the value of our proposals and then obtain their backing to progress with the development and deployment of the site. To ensure awareness of the site across the Trust we also ran an advertising campaign. We have developed an internet site managed by Junior Doctors for the Junior Doctors and the Trust. The site is now being used by doctors of all levels as a means of communication and as a clinical resource and will indirectly improve patient care.

Discussion and conclusions

By forming a Junior Doctors' based web team and using our skills and knowledge of web technologies we are resolving our communication problems. In doing so we are changing the culture of how information is disseminated and received in out Trust. This site requires on going commitment to provide up to date content as well as technical development. The communication problems we encountered are unlikely to be confined to our Trust and other NHS Trusts may benefit from hearing about the process we have been through. We would also like to hear about other groups experiences and learn from them. Our ultimate goal is to create a system that can be used as a Junior Doctors management tool that could be used in all Trusts across the NHS.