



Case Study: INR Self-testing Service

A new digital health screening service developed by County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust is transforming the lives of patients who take anticoagulant medication.

Anticoagulant medicines are most commonly prescribed for people who have a condition caused by a blood clot, such as deep vein thrombosis or pulmonary embolism. It may also be used by people who have had a heart attack, or atrial fibrillation which increases the risk of them developing a blood clot.

Typically, patients receiving warfarin, will need to regularly attend a healthcare setting – possibly once or twice a week. Here they would have a blood test so they can be assessed, and the appropriate dosage of warfarin prescribed.

How it works

Since the introduction of the Health Call INR Self-testing Service, patients no longer need to attend clinic regularly to have their INR levels tested. Their healthcare team provide them with the equipment needed. The patients take a finger prick blood test and place the sample onto a test strip. This test strip is then placed in a monitor. The monitor then provides a reading of their INR.

The patient then submits their reading either via an automated telephone call service, or through a web portal. Their reading is then reviewed by their clinical team who assess the feedback and provide details on the dosage for the next course of treatment and when their next screening should take place.

Sister Tracy Murphy who helps manage the service said:

"The new system is optional, although enthusiasm for it is very high amongst our patients. Primarily because it is much more convenient using this way, even for people who might not have access to smartphones or the internet.

"In addition, the training they receive gives patients a greater understanding of what can affect their INR. This means many of them are finding it easier to remain within their ideal therapeutic range. A major benefit of this stability is a reduced risk of stroke."

Derek Jones, who lives in Middleton St George uses the digital self-testing service. He said: *"I used to attend clinic every two weeks, sometimes weekly. My INR readings fluctuate, meaning I need very regular monitoring.*

The new system works around my life, rather than the other way round.

"I take my finger prick blood sample at 7.45am, just prior to receiving an automated call during which I give the reading. I get a further automated call at 6pm, after I return home from work, giving me any dosage changes and the date of the next reading. There's no disruption to my life now at all and I have the security of knowing that the specialist nurses are always at the end of the phone should I have concerns or feel the need to arrange a clinic visit. Now more than ever, the ability to use this fantastic automated system is of huge benefit to me and my family."



Please note this photo was taken pre-COVID19 pandemic