

	<p>Next Generation Learning @ Work in</p> <p>The NHS</p>
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<p>Doctors.net.uk</p>	<p>An effective multi-channel approach is used to reach doctors with training on two key hospital infections. Over 1,000 doctors used the training within the first 22 days of the pilot; subsequently over four and a half thousand completed the learning.</p> <p>Doctors.net.uk achieved this because of a strong brand that is training focused and directly relevant to doctors.</p> <p>The courses have accreditation to CPD, well designed, easy to access and flexible and accessible for busy professionals.</p> <p>More learners learnt in less time at less cost than by any other method.</p>

Business Challenge

There is a need to train health professionals throughout the NHS through Healthcare Associated Infections (HCAI). Doctors are busy professionals with demanding time-pressurised jobs. They require a source of education relevant specifically to them and available at their convenience.

Reducing the incidents of HCAI is a high priority at the Department of Health (DH). The two infections that DH is seeking to control are Methicillin Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus (MRSA) and Clostridium Difficile (C Diff). In November 2004 the Department announced its intention to halve the incidents of MRSA by 2008. The Chief Nursing Officer is responsible for delivering this target. The campaign includes a website (www.clean-safe-care.nhs.uk). The training and education for this programme is primarily aimed at nursing staff.

The Customer

The Department of Health exists to improve the health and well being of people in England but its education responsibilities are to present guidance, allowing target groups to essentially 'opt in' rather than mandate courses and content. As such any implementation of learning programmes, particularly e-Learning, requires an excellent clinical reputation, good contacts and networks within the NHS and an established delivery method.

The strategy for the education of healthcare professionals to support the MRSA target included an online learning programme. This was successful with nursing staff but the content was not directly relevant to doctors. The Department needed to reach doctors through influence rather than compulsion and therefore needed to work with an organisation that already had strong links with doctors and would quickly be able to encourage them to access learning more directly relevant to their role in supporting the control of HCAI.

Choice of supplier

Doctors.net.uk has an established track record with doctors. A previous programme developed by them won the 2006 e-Learning awards for online training. This was entitled "Pandemic Influenza" supporting targets of the Health Protection Agency. Over 15,000 doctors completed this within seven months of being launched. Learning at Doctors.net.uk revolves around Continuing Medical Education programme. It is freely available to doctors and has become part of their learning and information support facility. The overall website includes discussion forums, clinical content and news amongst other services. It is a vehicle for keeping our doctors up to date with changes and advances in medicine.

Learning Solution – a pilot

The Learning Solution of two online modules within a micro-site promoted and managed by Doctors.net.uk was run as a pilot in November 2007. The aim of the pilot was:

- To develop educational content for online interactive modules, to address the objectives of the HCAI programme; to reduce infections by 50%.
- To reach and engage doctors working in hospitals in England with the training and achieve completion of 1,500 modules by this group.
- To evaluate the user experience and educational outcomes of the material.

The training content was authored by a team of medical writers and clinicians with the guidance of the Chief Microbiologist for England – Professor Brian Duerden. The content was peer reviewed according to Doctors.net.uk's standard practice and signed off before publication.

- Each module has been awarded two CPD points (Continuous Professional Development) by the UK Conference of Educational Advisors.

The two modules were promoted through Doctors.net.uk's channels of communication to those doctors working in hospitals and other secondary care institutions. Initially 13,000 doctors, all users of on-line learning were targeted in the promotion of the pilot; an impressive 8% immediate response rate to an on-line communication.

- The pilot was highly successful with the target of 1,500 modules completed by 1,039 hospital doctors in just over three weeks.
- Learners evaluation scores were on average over 90% for all but one objective (88%) in both courses.

Learning Solution – roll out

Given these excellent results and good feedback from users the Department of Health agreed to launch the modules with the 10 Strategic Health Authorities in England. The target of the roll out was to engage 5,000 doctors with training and provide evaluation and usage data.

Marketing

Multiple marketing channels were an integral feature of achieving widespread adoption. A micro site was established to include these modules. This is distinct from the main online learning area of the website. This gives a higher profile and more distinct identity to the two courses on infection control. The education modules sat within a micro-site, describing why these modules were relevant to them and what they would learn by completing them. The modules were supported by downloadable PDF resources from the DH, podcast interviews and other resources on Doctors.net.uk.

The micro-site had the advantage of allowing the marketing to be focused and distinctive to the promotion of Doctors.net.uk. This enabled marketing to doctors who were not necessarily active users of the Doctors.net.uk facilities.

A number of distinct marketing methods were employed.

- E-mail to active users of Doctors.net.uk.
- E-mail to target groups within each SHA.
- E-mail to specific groups who had visited the micro site at an early stage of development.
- Influence of key stakeholders through their networks.
- News feeds sent to subscribers to the site linking to the micro site.
- A specific discussion forum set up within Doctors.net.uk on HCAI.
- Two Pod casts; one of the Chief Microbiologist for England and the other of Opposition politicians debating alternative strategies, were created for this campaign.
- E-mails to cross-market the alternative modules to doctors that had only completed one and promotion to doctors who had completed other topics within the Continuous Medical Education programme.

Other marketing strategies planned were

- bulk e-mail,
- stimulating debate within the discussion forum and
- mini surveys to highlight interest in the issue of infection control.

Business Impact

The Department of Health set a target to reduce HCAI incidents by 50% between 2004 and 2008. The education of health care staff was a key part of that strategy.

The online learning programme that was part of the Clean Safe Care project did not prove to be an effective training route for doctors; content not fully relevant and access not convenient to doctor's schedules. In 12 months less than 100 doctors had participated in this programme.

The new approach through the established doctors.net.uk channel exceeded the target for the pilot of 1,500 completed courses in 22 days and within 10 months 4,613 doctors had completed a total of 7,012 courses achieving a pass rate of 99%; 97% of doctors stated that they planned to modify their practices in a minor way as a result of completing the modules.

In fact 58,500 doctors visited the micro site on infection control within the first nine months (between November 2007 and July 2008) of the pilot and roll out.

The online learning has the advantage of consistency and speed enabling each SHA to reach the maximum of doctors in the shortest possible time. No other method could have achieved this reach or attracted this number of doctors in the timescale and cost.

The Department of Health has available non-electronic methods of reaching doctors, usually relying on a cascade process through strategic health authorities.

These include piggybacking on existing meetings run either by Health Trusts or regional strategic HSAs or key national meetings either on specific health issues or specific professional conferences. Given the competing priorities in such events this is at most a PR activity.

Monthly e-bulletins from the Clean Safe care website would raise awareness amongst doctors but given that this website is aimed at nursing staff this was unlikely to be as effective as appealing to doctors directly.

The most direct method is hands-on support via the targeted support trust based improvement team. As its name suggests these teams work within specific trusts to support different programmes of that may include infection control.

Time and Cost Impact

Any conference or event requires doctors to be away from work and to reach all the 4,613 who completed this learning would take far longer than the 10 months in which the roll out achieved its current usage rate Relying on cascading the message increases its dilution and variation in learning.

The online learning had the advantage of consistency and speed plus the added bonus of usage figures being tracked. Enabling each SHA monitor its progress towards raising awareness with doctors.

Doctors.net.uk reported completion rates and results to the Department of Health who provided a breakdown of the data to the Directors of Strategic Health Authorities.

A typical comment from key stakeholders is “Doctors.net.uk is the easiest and most efficient way of reaching doctors en masse. We have found eCME to be the most effective way to reach and train the optimum number of doctors required to meet our targets. The fact that the modules are accredited, convenient and simple to use made it first choice for SHAs.”.

Hypothetically to train this number of doctors with face-to-face methods allowing, say, half a day for both topics equates to 2,300 days of training.

Allowing, say, £200 per day for premises cost, travel and the staff salary impact of training time and travel gives a hypothetical cost of £460k, without the cost of developing the material.

Taking clinicians away from the wards, clinics and operating theatres for face to face training leads to significant disruption of clinical services. The financial implications of arranging extra staff to cover staff training is difficult to quantify but is very significant. Overall a conservative estimate for delivering this training by face to face methods is in the range of £200 to £400 per doctor depending on their seniority.

In practice, developing this module and delivering the training to doctors throughout the NHS was around one tenth of the cost of the face to face alternative. In reality this training has reached many more doctors than would have been reached by any other method; bear in mind that less than 100 doctors had participated in the clean-safe-care.nhs.uk <<http://www.clean-safe-care.nhs.uk/>> web site during the first 12 months of use.

One benefit for individuals is the reduced study time and accessibility. Each topic would have required half a day away from clinical work but the efficiency of the on-line material meant that each learner spent on average 3 hours learning (over 2 modules).

Staff Impact

Does this message saving represent a drop in quality? Unlikely, with doctors evaluation of the modules averaging 94.6% across both modules.

Learners themselves value the training and its delivery methods;

Thank you, it was very useful. This is my first module. I enjoyed it and it was very interesting.”

“One of the best.”

“As an NHS consultant physician as well as a management healthcare management consultant, I believe that Doctors.net.uk has shown a high degree of commitment in the development of its postgraduate educational programme.”

“Well it helped me to imbibe the general view regarding C Diff infection and its current guidelines.”.

7 Top Tips from the NHS and Doctors.net.uk

1. Widespread adoption needs products with a well-recognised trusted brand as well as good quality.
2. Gaining accreditation for CPD points for studying rewards completion of courses in a tangible and relevant way.
3. Successful marketing requires multiple channels of communication. Ideally this should include non-electronic as well as electronic.
4. Learning online works best when part of an online reference site.
5. Establishing a distinctive sub-site or “micro site” simplifies marketing a specific learning product and learning initiative.
6. A pilot project is a key influence strategy to engage senior stakeholders who “own” the target population. In this case strategic health authorities.
7. Customising the same message to distinct groups increases the perceived relevance of learning and hence its take-up.