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### **EVitals – putting patient safety at the forefront of everyday practice**

Patient safety is at the very heart of a newly rolled out electronic initiative giving staff at the Waitakere and North Shore hospitals quick, easy and simultaneous access to patients' charts – all via mini i-pads or computers.

EVitals captures all nursing observations and charts in an electronic format – eliminating the need for old paper charts that were sometimes difficult to read, hard to find and incomplete.

Waitemata is the first DHB in the country to complete a full roll out of the system that allows real-time monitoring of a patient's vital information. Its efforts are leading the way in Australasia.

Statistics show the DHB's nurses used to spend an average of 31 minutes per shift looking for misplaced charts.

But those days are now over - the 'lost time' figure is down to 0 and staff have more time to spend on direct patient care.

Electronic observations and charts are more user-friendly than their handwritten predecessors which were sometimes difficult to read and therefore open to misinterpretation. The risk of error is therefore significantly reduced and patient safety is at the absolute forefront of everyday practice.

Clinical lead Peter Groom says eVitals makes patient data immediately accessible to the health professionals who need it.

"If you're a dietitian and you're looking at weights – it's available. Similarly you might be elsewhere in the hospital but still able to ensure the correct amount of fluid is being administered," he says.

"If you're a physio who wants to check someone's blood pressure before standing them up - it's also available.

"Or maybe you're a doctor who's worried about how someone is doing post-operatively... now you can check their charts between your cases in theatre while the patient is on the wards."

The system ensures nursing observations are completed on time and accurately.

It allows clinical staff to identify deteriorating patients early and deliver treatment quickly.

EVitals operates alongside e-prescribing – a similar concept that allows medication to be prescribed by doctors at the stroke of a key and administration to be recorded electronically.

The Waitemata DHB is the first in the country to implement a mobility solution that enables both developments.

Relevant information is stored on a server and accessible in a secure environment via 500 mini iPads located across the DHB, as well as Computers on Wheels (or COWS) that clinical staff take on ward rounds when seeing patients.

Peter says the feedback from staff is positive. "Nurses don't miss the paper forms at all and report significant time savings with observation and prescription charges now available in their pockets," he says.

"Doctors find it more convenient being able to check up on their patients without leaving their clinic or the operating theatre."

The introduction of the system is the next step in moving the DHB to an all-electronic health record (EHR) designed to improve safety by ensuring patient information is readily available to clinicians and cannot be misread.

"I think we will reach a point – perhaps in five years' time - when people will be very surprised if medical staff are still pulling out bits of paper on the job," Peter says.

**Ends**

**CAPTION:** Waitemata DHB eVitals Clinical Lead Peter Groom with a Computer on Wheels (COW) and iPad. Both devices give staff quick and easy electronic access to information once recorded on paper charts.

**For further information contact:**

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