Patient
Source

Patient care safely in one place

Thought leadership

Buying an EPR system from an SME

Toby Roberts, Associate Director of Information and Technology at the Royal Hospital for Neuro-disability (RHN), writes about his decision to procure an EPR system from an SME, as opposed to a big-name solution.

We put our faith in an SME – we never looked back

Working for a charity hospital is quite unlike working anywhere else. Mainly because we fundraise £3.4m every year to provide extra services for our patients and residents, who are often with us for a long time, so this becomes their home.

The right fit

Our patients must come first and so capital projects that directly impact their care are naturally prioritised. Although we have made some significant investments in infrastructure over the last few years, we have never managed to make the leap, until recently, in using paper-based records and work processes. We had to get an EPR platform that was the right fit for our organisation.

EPR projects are notorious for overspends and delays – something that we, and many other organisations, know all too well. Even at RHN, over the past 20 years, there had already been two separate attempts to digitise patient records. So, in spite of our clear willingness to move away from paper, you can forgive our trepidation for attempting the switch for the third time.

But, eventually, we did.

You see, at the RHN, our patients have complex needs: many of them unable to communicate or speak, and many of them are on significantly more medication than your average hospital patient, with staff managing between 30-40,000 drug interactions per month. And while incidences of drug errors are generally very, very low, any incident is one too many.

So, we turned to PatientSource. The fact of the matter was we simply couldn't afford a bigger-name solution. And so, despite being a fairly young SME, PatientSource was a less risky option for us. The initial outlay was cheaper, and it didn't require any extra specialist hardware or apps – all it required was a web browser.

But aside from cost-savings, we also realised that there were more benefits of working with an SME, benefits we hadn't previously accounted for. Number one being: that they genuinely cared.

From the very get-go, PatientSource worked closely with our team at the RHN to ensure its technology met all of our specific requirements – many of which were unique due to the complex needs of our patients. They also provided full training, and they were even on-hand to provide support in the week that the system went live on the wards (physically moving into the hospital).

To be physically there, showing staff how to use the system, and creating bespoke functionality based on the feedback they were receiving, on the frontline of care, it simply wouldn't have happened with a 'big' EPR provider.

PatientSource understood us, and we understood them; we were as important to them as they were to us – and that made for the perfect partnership.

But what about the results? Well, unsurprisingly, they've been positive too. In fact, within just one month, we noticed the positive impact of the PatientSource e-prescribing module, with prescription errors reduced by 83% (from six incidents in April 2018 down to one during April 2019).

So why then is there such reluctance elsewhere to take a punt on 'unproven' suppliers? Well: "You won't be sacked for buying EPIC or Cerner", so the old trope goes. But while this may be true, by ignoring SMEs, you're only limiting your digital potential. So many SMEs have so much to offer and, from our experience, you won't be disappointed.

"PatientSource understood us, and we understood them;"

Patient Source®

Patient care safely in one place

Buying an EPR system from an SME