

Experts design new outcomes website for heart surgeons

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In a move towards greater transparency patients will now be able to access a wealth of data about heart surgery in the UK and go online and examine their heart surgeon's and hospital's outcome data prior to an operation thanks to an innovative new website designed with input from The University of Manchester.

[The Blue Book Online](#), has been developed in partnership with National Institute for [Cardiovascular Outcomes](#) Research, NorthWest E-Health, a partnership between The University of Manchester, Salford Royal Foundation Trust and Salford NHS, and the Manchester Academic Health Science Centre.

The Society of Cardiothoracic surgeons (SCTS) announced the ground breaking new development aimed at harnessing the digital age at their annual meeting in Brighton today (Monday 18 March).

This will sit alongside the existing website to provide further information and reassurances to patients about the quality of their potential surgery. The ultimate aim of the new websites is to help patients make informed choices about their care.

The cardiac surgeons have published outcomes of surgery by hospital and individual surgeons for some time, and have recently refreshed this data on their website. For patients undergoing [cardiac surgery](#), the websites demonstrate a move towards greater transparency and is in recognition of the fact that the internet is rapidly changing how people

access information.

Using simple web tools, patients will be able to research the type of operation they are going to have, establish how many similar operations are carried out each year and understand the potential risks associated with their operation.

During the conference the SCTS will also unveil a suite of digital products aimed at raising standards and improving results in [heart surgery](#).

This includes: a demonstration of their e-lab, a professional governance tool kit that allows surgeons to analyse their outcomes and compare them with their peers. The e-lab has been developed without the need for costly and complex IT projects and crucially the methods are transferable to other areas of medicine.

They will also reveal well advanced plans for developing an App for mobile devices. This will allow surgeons on-the-go access to outcomes data and will assist them in making rapid accurate and effective decisions about a patient's care.

The SCTS are urging other surgical specialties to replicate their investment in outcomes digital technology and transparency, highlighting that effective reporting of outcome data will be a huge step towards preventing failures in clinical governance.

The organisation points to recommendations in the recent Francis Report into the failings at Mid Staffordshire hospital which state: 'It should be considered the duty of all specialty professional bodies, ideally together with the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence, to develop measures of outcome in relation to their work and to assist in the development of measures of standards compliance.'

Mr James Roxburgh, President of the SCTS, said: "It seems likely that the only effective way of preventing further gross failures of clinical governance is to have more widespread and transparent use of clinical outcomes data. We have previously published our data in a series of comprehensive audits, but now see clear, accurate and comparative web-based information as the most suitable platform for surgeons and patients. There needs to be a focus on the whole service we provide and not just clinical outcomes. The Bluebook online and other associated IT tools will empower patients and lead to better decision making by professionals and a more positive patient experience."

Ben Bridgewater, lead author of the report and Consultant Cardiac Surgeon at the University Hospital of South Manchester Said, said: "Information is integral to quality healthcare and we have seen an exponential increase in the amount of patients using the internet to find out more accurate and trusted detail about their care. In a modernised NHS this is the ideal way for us to publish and keep up-to-date data of surgeons' and hospitals' clinical outcomes."

Also being discussed at the conference is the society's Blue Book for patients, a publically accessible detailed audit of heart operations carried out in the UK.

This publication will provide detailed analyses of three years of heart operations and make suggestions for future developments in patient experience. It highlights that in addition to surgical performance the entire patient's journey from referral to discharge needs to be measured in order to effectively improve quality of care.

Until now, the SCTS audits have been published as paper based governance tools for use by healthcare professionals primarily. The Blue Book for patients and the online version are aimed at putting patients at the heart of all SCTS activities.

North West E-Health developed the Blue Book with the SCTS. A not-for-profit organisation which specialises in the development of software to support the innovative and ethical use and analysis of routinely collected data, North West E-Health was set up in 2008.

Sarah Thew, User Research Lead at North West E-Health, said following the Francis report they expected their work helping hospitals to display outcomes data would become more and more important. Ms Thew said: "We were approached by The Society for Cardiothoracic surgeons who had collected all this data which was available to the general public in hardback books as they were looking for ways to make it more accessible and keep it up to date.

"We had the specialist skills to use the data and have developed a website which makes use of all this information so that patients can have a look at hospitals in their area and the risks associated with different operations and how this has changed over time from 2001.

"[Patients](#) can also look at their age and other factors which might have an impact. This website speeds the whole process up. We will be updating the information every three months to ensure it is up-to-date."

Provided by University of Manchester

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