

Parallel Sessions D
D2 – Library Innovations for Clinically Effective Practice

Saturday, September 21, Room C, 9.00

Common Knowledge : Developing the National Electronic Library for Health for All

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The National electronic Library for Health (NeLH) was launched as a pilot service in November 2000 with the aim of providing clinicians and NHS staff with fast and easy access to best knowledge to achieve evidence based medicine and improve clinical governance.

NeLH content is evaluated by an External Reference Group comprising clinicians, R&D and librarians. The pilot service launched with The Cochrane Library, Clinical Evidence and R&D outputs.

The development of Virtual Branch Libraries and subject portals supporting Communities of Practice bring together guidelines, protocols and evidence for practitioners and patients.

The NHS Plan, and modernising Government agenda makes it clear that patients are to be placed at the heart of the NHS and should have access to the same knowledgebase as clinicians and staff. Healthcare decisions will be made within a partnership of informed patients and knowledgeable clinicians. Patient Advocates and voluntary experts will also have a 'need to know.'

For NeLH this means expanding our horizons to work in partnership with NHS Direct Online; the electronic Library for Social Care and public and Higher Education library services.

Partnership working brings many rewards but equally offers complex challenges. Technical aspects of networks, password authentication and licences for content can be overcome but there are also separate funding streams and timetables, differing views on the nature of evidence and cultural differences to resolve. NeLH is determined to develop as a cross sectoral, cross boundary virtual library for health- open and accessible to all.

The presentation will briefly review NeLH progress in 2001/2 and highlight work on developments that challenge existing barriers to sharing knowledge.