

Secretary of State for Health, Alan Johnson sees PACS in action at St Mary's.

## PACS supports the ways of working at St Mary's hospital

***"Because all the images and clinical details are available instantly, the turnaround time for reporting is much quicker. We no longer have to search through packets of films only to discover that films are missing."***

Deborah Cunningham, Clinical Director of Radiology at St Mary's hospital, part of Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust, says how PACS is helping clinicians to provide a better service to patients. St Mary's hospital went live with PACS in the summer of 2006. Since that time, working practices of clinicians have changed dramatically for the better as the trust transferred from the conventional methods of x-ray and scanning to becoming 100% filmless.

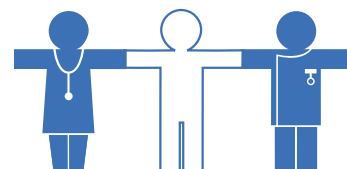
### ***Changing working practices***

As with any large scale change programme, there has been a significant impact on working routines. Deborah explains: "PACS has made a huge difference and transformed the way in which we work for the better. For instance, now that we have previous films electronically archived on PACS, the system is fantastically easy to use! Everything you need is there at the click of a button. Because all the images and clinical details are available instantly, the turnaround time

for reporting is much quicker. We no longer have to search through packets of films only to discover that films are missing. With PACS, this is never the case because there are no lost images. At St Mary's hospital, the trust has provided each department with a PACS terminal in every consultant's office, enabling images stored on PACS to be viewed simultaneously in multiple locations."

### ***Sharing images***

Deborah enthuses, "Being able to share images and get a second opinion is great because, if you are unsure about something, you can make a phone call to a colleague and both look at the same image whilst having a clinical discussion about a patient's diagnosis. This works really well for our minor injuries remote site because even if there is no radiologist physically on site, the images are instantly available to consultants in other locations to review and report on. It's just a matter of making a phone call.





***“The health and safety concerns associated with chemical processing are no longer an issue and as a result the department is a much nicer environment. We would never want to go back to the old system.”***

“PACS has also made a big difference to the way we run multidisciplinary meetings. Before PACS, scans and x-rays had to be collected manually and we would have to physically go through several packets of films when reviewing cases. Now, all we have to do is put everything we need to review in a folder on PACS. During the meeting, everyone can access the images at the same time regardless of where they are located in the trust. PACS really does make life a lot easier.”

### ***Changes in working practices***

As Deborah explains, clinicians are not the only ones enjoying the benefits of PACS at St Mary's: administrative staff, who used to be responsible for image retrieval and filing have now been freed up to undertake more interesting or productive tasks.

“The working practices of our clerks have become much easier. Some have moved on to new roles and those that remain have a much more pleasant and less physical job. Before PACS, a huge effort would be put into pulling packets for clinics and you would see porters going back and forth pushing trolleys stacked with films - most of which were never even looked at! Things are very different now, because with PACS none of that needs to happen.”

“Our working environment has also improved significantly because we have so much more space. The health and safety concerns associated with chemical processing are no longer an issue and as a result the department is a much nicer environment. We would never want to go back to the old system.”

Looking ahead, Deborah is particularly excited about the prospect of improved image sharing between trusts.

“This will make a significant difference on the rare occasions where it's required. Specialist hospitals and tertiary referral centres will benefit massively from this. It's something very exciting to look forward to!”

