Instant Messaging in Healthcare

Medicine 2019, Manchester
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• Doctor and digital health entrepreneur

• Developing digital technology for the health and care sector for over 10 years

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• Member of London South Bank University’s Simulation for Digital Health
Delivering insightful science.

The healthcare communications agency specialising in digital.

www.medDigital.com

The instant messenger for health and care

Keeping everyone in touch while protecting confidential information to the required information to the required standards.

www.medCrowd.com
Widespread use of non-compliant messengers

A major study in 2015 showed extensive use of non-compliant mobile apps and devices by health and care workers to send patient-related clinical information at work:

- 65% of doctors used SMS messaging.
- 33% of doctors used messaging apps.
- 46% of doctors used picture messaging apps.

- In 2015, 71.6% of doctors and 37.2% of nurses wanted a secure alternative.


Large London-based NHS Trust with 5 hospital sites. n = 2,107 doctors + 4,069 nurses
Use of WhatsApp in NHS 'widespread', say doctors

By Jane Wakefield
Technology reporter

Doctors and nurses are using WhatsApp and Snapchat to share information about patients "across the NHS", health professionals have told the BBC.

GP Alisdair MacNair said he was aware of a number of medical groups using WhatsApp to discuss patients.

Use of internet-based messaging apps to send patient information is banned under current NHS guidelines.

NHS England told the BBC that it had no comment on the matter.
Widespread use of non-compliant messengers

Research was commissioned in 2018 to understand the number of NHS staff using consumer messaging apps and understand their impact.

• >500,000 NHS staff use consumer messaging apps to communicate with colleagues at work.

• 2.43% of NHS staff have been subject to disciplinary action for using messaging apps.

• 30% of NHS staff believe patient care would suffer if HCPs did not use consumer messaging apps.

Consumer messaging apps occupy a precarious position within the NHS; enabling staff efficiency at the cost of data security.

Instant Messaging in the NHS: Consumer Messaging Applications & Healthcare Delivery
Based on a survey of 823 NHS staff
Why?
Messaging apps preform an essential function

A study conducted by Dr Georgina Gould and Dr Ramin Nilforooshan in July 2016 on the use of WhatsApp by junior doctors at St Peters Hospital in Chertsey, UK, showed:

• >33% of all messages consisted of advice or support.
• 72.5% doctors' perceived it was a good thing.
• 80% reported improvement in the relationship between grades.
• Concluded that messaging is performing an essential function


40 junior doctors were asked about their use of WhatsApp.
The benefits of messaging

- Simple
- Short (fast)
- Ubiquitous
- Asynchronous
- Non-verbal cues (emojis)
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The downsides of consumer messaging

• Lack of security
• Not compliant with the required standards
• Sending to the wrong contact
• Misunderstandings
  − Ambiguous language
  − Lack of non-verbal clues
• Images stored on the device may end up in the cloud
Your organisation has clear responsibilities

NHS organisations must follow the Data Protection and Security Toolkit

The Data Security and Protection Toolkit is an online self-assessment tool that all organisations must use if they have access to NHS patient data and systems.

Data Security and Protection Toolkit
Released April 2018
You are responsible for confidentiality

Confidentiality: good practice in handling patient information

The guidance gives eight principles that should apply to your practice. It provides a framework to help you decide when you can share information. And helps you to think about why you are sharing the information.

Confidentiality: good practice in handling patient information
Updated on 25 May 2018
You have clear responsibilities

"Don't put patient, sensitive or security classified information on social media [including messaging apps like WhatsApp]; this would breach data protection laws or patient confidentiality and result in a security incident."

NHS Digital's Use of Social Media User Guide
Issued on 23rd May 2017
You have clear responsibilities

“Instant messaging can have clinical utility but remember that the law places obligations on organisations to protect patient confidentiality. If you are a clinician, you may also have to defend yourself against regulatory investigation.”

“Only use a standalone instant messaging application if your organisation does not provide a suitable alternative.”

Guidance on using instant messaging in acute clinical settings
Issued on 9th November 2018
You must protect confidential data

• Keep your device secure
  − Password or biometric ID on device with short lock out time.
  − Enable remote wipe.

• Keep confidential information secure on your device
  − Password or biometric ID on messaging app with short lock out time.
  − Keep content of notifications hidden.
  − Choose a messenger that complies with the required standards.

• Minimise identifiable information
Top tips

• Passcode protect your device
• Send only to the right people
• Use non-verbal cues to avoid misunderstandings
• Separate work and life
• Delete images immediately
Thank you