



Healthcare Briefing

Produced by Early Morning Media

A round-up of the key press news and comment relating to healthcare

Thursday, 17th January 2019

THE HOT STORY

NHS trials AI software to diagnose breast cancer

Kheiron Medical has announced that it will use artificial intelligence to try to diagnose breast cancer, as it launches a trial on historic scans this month in Leeds. Meanwhile DeepMind has launched a similar trial, working with the NHS and CRUK to test its own algorithm against medical records. The intention is to simplify the diagnosis of breast cancer, giving doctors a tool to help them decipher the results of mammograms. According to Imperial College London, thousands of cases are not picked up by mammograms each year. Cancer Research has also developed a “game changing” online test that uses algorithms to calculate the risk of breast cancer by combining data on family history and genetic blood tests with other factors, such as weight, age at menopause and alcohol consumption. Another new test, developed by the Institute of Cancer Research and the Royal Marsden Hospital, has been developed to predict if and when successfully treated bowel cancer will return. In 75% of cases the “liquid biopsies” picked up signs earlier than a CT scan could.

[Financial Times](#) [The Guardian](#) [Daily Mirror](#) [Daily Mail](#) [Daily Express](#) [The Sun](#)

MEDICINE & TREATMENT

Over 1,400 patients affected by bed blocking in one month

The latest official NHS Scotland information services division statistics show that over 1,400 people had to stay in hospital despite being fit enough to leave, over one month. The figure represents an 8% fall on the previous month and 1% down on November 2017. The most common reason, at 74% of cases, for the ‘bed blocking’ was health and social care reasons such as not having a care package in place, while 23% were unable to leave despite being medically fit enough to do so due to their complex needs, and 3% experienced a delay due to patient and family-related reasons. Professor Derek Bell, president of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh, noted: “Although the average total number of patients delayed across Scotland remains fairly static taking into account seasonal changes, the number of available staffed beds being used may be more relevant here, as this will have most impact on acute hospitals.”

Daily Mail

Machine keeps donor livers alive longer

A “mechanical body” that can keep transplant livers alive outside the body for 24 hours has been approved for use in the NHS, in a move that experts say will halve the waiting list. Previously a liver would spoil after eight-to-ten hours on ice. The technology mimics the way in which the body supplies the liver with oxygen and nutrients to keep it alive for longer once removed. It will give more liver recipients a better chance of survival by boosting supply by up to 15%, as fewer organs will be disposed of because of the poor health of the donor. It is hoped that the technology will eventually be adapted so that damaged organs can be repaired prior to being transplanted.

[The Times](#) [The Daily Telegraph](#) [Daily Mail](#) [Daily Mirror](#) [Daily Express](#)

TRIALS

PrEP Impact participants to double in number

The question of whether or not to increase the number of participants in the PrEP Impact trial from 13,000 to up to 26,000 by 2020 is being considered by researchers. John Stewart, Director of Specialised Commissioning at NHS England commented: “Through the PrEP trial, over 10,000 people are already receiving access to this important HIV prevention measure. The trial researchers have submitted a case for increasing trial places and NHS England will play its part in delivering on this recommendation by committing to fund additional places in line with existing funding arrangements.”

[Health Business Risk](#)

Extra meals for elderly patients cuts death rate

An NHS trial, at five trusts across England and one in Scotland, has indicated that providing elderly patients with an extra meal a day halves their chances of dying in hospital. Since the project began two years ago, death rates among those admitted with hip fractures have plummeted. The Royal College of Physicians is now considering recommending that the practice becomes official NHS policy.

[The Daily Telegraph](#) [The Sunday Times](#)

POLICY & REGULATION

IVF clinics told not to charge for add-ons

The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA) has ordered private IVF clinics not to charge patients for additional fertility treatments unless they have been proven to work in multiple high-quality trials. Unless evidence has been gathered from at least two trials, add-ons should only be offered “in a research setting” and patients should not be charged. It comes after reports showed evidence that patients were being offered add-ons “without conclusive evidence that any of them increase the chance of a pregnancy”. Elsewhere, campaigners have delivered a petition signed by 100,000 people to No 10 calling for an end to the NHS “postcode lottery” on IVF treatment. National guidelines say those under-40 should be offered three cycles of IVF on the NHS, but women living in some areas are offered fewer.

[The Times](#) [The Daily Telegraph](#) [Daily Mirror](#)

HEALTHTECH

Britain and Japan to create pioneering healthtech

Medical researchers in Britain and Japan are to collaborate on research into treatments for debilitating degenerative diseases, Prime Minister Theresa May, Business Secretary Greg Clark and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe have announced. A new £30m partnership to promote new technology and innovation in the field has been launched, and will include a £10m programme led by the Medical Research Council and Japan's Agency for Medical Research and Development. Business Secretary Greg Clark said: "This government wants to give older people at least five extra healthy independent years of life by 2035... The new NHS long term plan and the modern Industrial Strategy's Ageing Society Grand Challenge will help people age well and use technology to detect and prevent diseases sooner."

[THHS](#)

Healthtech innovators' 2019 predictions

With digital health companies securing over \$7.5bn in investment across 2018, this year looks set to continue the growth of the sector. Features a list of predictions for 2019, including: an increase in the sector's scale and reach, growing use of artificial intelligence, progress within the field of genomics, and consumers increasingly viewing healthtech as an investment in their wellbeing, with millions already using products like FitBit and Apple Watch to proactively monitor their physical activity.

[Forbes](#)

Healthtech accelerator to help UK start-ups

Start-ups with innovative technologies designed to tackle some of the most pressing healthcare challenges are being built and scaled by UK healthtech accelerator HS., founded by doctor-entrepreneur duo Dr Alex Young and Dr James Somauroo, The firm aims to help entrepreneurs reach out to patient test beds outside of the NHS, thereby filling gaps in the healthcare market. Dr Alex Young, CEO, remarked: "One of the default thoughts of people when they often start a healthtech company is the casual assumption that they must help the NHS, and that they have a health product so it must sell to the NHS and actually, it's a case of sitting down with those start-ups and going through that strategy".

[Techworld](#)

Boots acquires Wiggly-Amps healthtech firm

Boots has acquired tech company Wiggly-Amps for an undisclosed fee as it grows its presence in the digital healthcare sector. The firm provides a number of services including check-in screens at GP surgeries, weight measurements, consultations and prescription services, alongside creating and hosting GP websites. Richard Bradley, pharmacy director at Boots UK, commented: "Wiggly-Amps allows Boots UK to access software, which provides the technology capability that links the customers and patients from Boots, directly to their GP records for ordering prescriptions online." He noted: "Not only will this empower customers to better manage their healthcare needs in an accessible way, it will make the process much simpler and quicker for patients and supports the NHS in the longer term."

[Digital Health](#)

Chronomics raises £1.12m for health test product

London-based startup Chronomics, which has just launched what it describes as “the world’s first consumer epigenetic testing kit” has raised £1.12m from Anthemis, SOSV, and angel investors. The firm’s saliva test is intended to introduce a personalised and proactive approach to health management, using “biological age, metabolic status, and the impact of smoke exposure on the body” to provide insights into a person’s health.

[Tech.EU](#) [BDaily](#)

EMPLOYMENT

NHS has 15% more managers since reforms

The number of managers working in the NHS has grown by 15% in the seven years since the introduction of costly health service reforms - which were intended to cut bureaucracy. Now health secretary Matt Hancock is planning to reverse some of his predecessor Andrew Lansley’s changes, which have cost taxpayers an estimated £3bn, after NHS leaders said they were getting in the way of implementing a ten-year plan. Mark Dayan, policy analyst at the Nuffield Trust, said: “Since 2012, we’ve actually seen numbers of managers rise again. It might be that initial cuts actually went too far and left the NHS without enough executives, forcing it to rely more on pricey management consultants.” Another element of the Health and Social Care Act 2012 that forces trusts to tender out large contracts to private service providers, which often prevents them from saving money where possible. The 10-year plan, produced by the head of NHS England Simon Stevens, sets out to spend on ways to prevent serious illness by improving GP and community services. However, an opinion piece in the *FT* by Camilla Cavendish suggests the unstructured nature of the NHS is creating divides between services that could scupper those plans.

[The Times](#) [Financial Times](#) [The Daily Telegraph](#) [The Guardian](#)

More funding for GP training places recommended

The independent GP partnership review led by Dr Nigel Watson has published its final recommendations, including greater funding for GP training places and a more specialised focus in medical training on general practice as a positive career choice. Dr Watson remarked: “General practice remains the fundamental building block of the NHS and essential for the health and well-being of the rest of the NHS. It is clear to me having talked to many GPs and others who work in general practice and also visited many parts of the country that there remains huge potential in terms of delivering high quality care based in the community delivered close to people’s homes.”

[Health Business Risk](#)

PRACTICE

Review: GP partners should be offered new legal structures

The review of the partnership model in England has concluded that to mitigate the risk of unlimited liability that partners face, different legal structures must be made available to partners holding GMS and PMS contracts. The report states that: “There are significant opportunities to reduce the personal risk and unlimited liability currently associated with GP partnerships. The government should introduce the option of GP partnerships holding a GMS or PMS contract under a different legal model, such as

limited liability partnerships [LLPs] and mutuals.” However, partnership review lead Dr Nigel Watson, chief executive of Wessex LMCs, cautioned that it was still not clear how beneficial certain types of alternative legal structures are. Meanwhile, Dr Richard Vautrey, BMA GP committee chair, stated: “As the review suggests, there isn't a simple alternative legal structure that could significantly limit liability whilst maintaining a partnership model, which is why the review suggests further legal opinions are sought to clarify this”, while Dr Krishna Kasaraneni, BMA GP committee executive team lead for premises, noted that: “Problems with premises continue to be some of the most common issues raised with us by members... Therefore, we would welcome a move such as this to reduce the risks for partners who lease their practice building.”

[Pulse](#)

GPs supported by tech innovation

Karen Livingstone, national director, SBRI Healthcare writes in *Practice Business* on the NHS Long Term Plan, which she says “rightly puts GPs and primary care front and centre of its strategy for the future of healthcare provision”, asking whether or not technology can really deliver the benefits people expect. She notes that if GPs cannot work any harder, then ways to help GPs work differently must be identified, but cautions that “for every tech idea that makes it into GP surgeries, there are many more that fall by the wayside”. She points out that the economic practicalities of introducing new technologies to the primary care market must be taken into consideration, recommending solutions such as myMhealth and Active8rlives, which “have successfully delivered tools based on smart-tech platforms combined with wearables or apps.”

[Practice Business](#)

GP practice relocation subsidised

Barnet Clinical Commissioning Group has resorted to offering subsidies to persuade a GP practice to move into the primary care space in Finchley Memorial Hospital since the site was opened to patients six years ago. Barnet CCG committee papers state: “The site was developed on the basis that a GP practice would part-occupy the unit,” but notes that “the relatively high service charge” of more than £39,000 a year may be putting tenants off. GPs are now being offered a financial support package to move in.

[HSJ](#)

CARE

Mental health problems affecting family carers

An ONS report says more than a quarter of ‘sandwich carers’ – people who look after their elderly parents and their children – are suffering from depression or stress. There are 1.3m people in the UK with such multi-generational caring responsibilities, and the ONS says the number is growing due to a combination of longer life expectancy and women tending to have children later in life. One in three sandwich carers also say that financially they are “just about getting by”.

[BBC News](#) [The Guardian](#) [Daily Mail](#)

INDUSTRY

Takeda completes Shire takeover

Takeda has completed its \$59bn (£46bn) takeover, the largest ever for a Japanese firm, of London-listed Shire months ahead of schedule. Now one of the world's ten biggest pharmaceutical companies, the deal creates a \$30bn pharmaceutical giant focused on oncology, gastroenterology, neuroscience, rare diseases and plasma-derived therapies.

City AM

Spire issues profit warning

Shares in Spire Healthcare were trading down 13% by early afternoon yesterday at 101.2p after the private hospital chain cut up to £6m from its full-year earnings estimate. Spire said that its earnings in 2018 before interest, tax and other charges and excluding exceptional items were set to be about £120m. The company said that it had been affected by the pressures in the NHS.

[Financial Times](#) [The Times](#)

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