

Scottish Pilot Case Study

LabelTrace Delivers Better Data in Less Time

Overview

LabelTrace is a low cost labelling solution that enables primary care staff to print labels for patient test requests and samples directly from the clinical system, saving considerable time and greatly improving the quality of data provided to the labs. LabelTrace was developed by QuickTrace Ltd.

Software & Hardware Partners:
QuickTrace and Zebra



Executive Summary

The National Programme for IT (NPFIT) is introducing major enhancements to the way information is managed within our health service. Standardised electronic bookings, transmission of prescriptions and patient care records will soon become a reality. Accurate and efficient data entry is imperative for the roll out of this new technology to be successful. However, research by one health authority, the Argyll & Clyde Health Board, showed that only 15% of tests requested by GPs carried the required data. The answer was to deploy LabelTrace software that achieved over 98% accuracy of information, *and* saved practices 5-6 hours per week over the original hand written procedure.

The Challenge

In Primary Care, for Laboratory results to be available electronically at the GP's practice the initial test request must carry three pieces of fundamental data about the patient; a unique patient ID, forename and surname. If any one piece of this information is missing or inaccurate then 'the patient result' will not be visible via technology at the practice.

A data quality survey carried out by the Argyll & Clyde Health Board identified that a high percentage of laboratory test requests did not carry the minimum amount of information required. 69% of requests from hospitals carried sufficient data, but only 15% of requests from General Practice carried a patient ID. Therefore introducing electronic test results would always pose a problem in sourcing results back to the requestor. A solution was needed to ensure that accurate patient IT data was available for every laboratory test request.

The Solution

A solution to ensure the patient ID etc would be present and correct on request forms submitted by GP Practices was developed by software company Quicktrace Ltd in partnership with NHS Lothian and NHS Argyll and Clyde. Called LabelTrace, it interfaces with the patient record held on the GP system (GPASS, Synergy, Vision etc). With the click of a button, the software will generate a set of labels (one for each copy of the test request form and one for the specimen bottle).

The label tells the labs who the patient is i.e. the patient identifier (plus bar code), Surname, Forename, Date of Birth and also carries additional information important to the labs.

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The labels are generated in 'real time' on a small Zebra LP2824 label printer supplied by Quicktrace Ltd and the company's hardware partner, Codegate Ltd. Its small size (15 x 10 x 20 cm) didn't present any space problems when attached to the pc terminal in each consulting and treatment room in the Practice. The label printer's connection (serial) ensures there is no interference with printers already connected to the pc. Labels can easily be peeled off and placed on the request forms and samples. The printers are very easy to use and robust, working off thermal technology i.e. no need for messy changing of ribbons or ink cartridges.

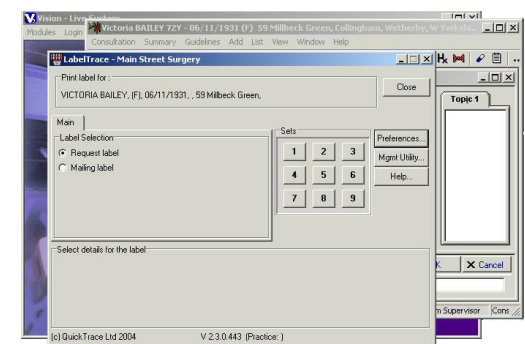
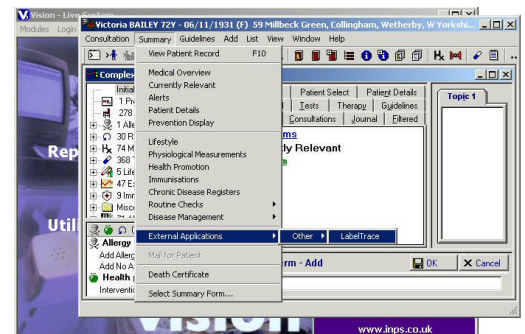
When request forms and samples are received at the labs they are then scanned in ensuring the requests are carried into the system with the correct patient details. The results are then available and visible to the Practice.

The Benefits

The label printing solution was successfully piloted in the Lavern Medical Group and the Charleston Practice. Janet Wilson, Practice Nurse within Charleston, having piloted the label printer said "The label printer has been great. Rather than spending time and effort filling out patient details on forms and bottles, the labels are printed instantaneously." Helen Winton, Practice Manager at Lavern Medical Group, reported that LabelTrace worked so well that none of the GPs or nurses wanted to go back to handwriting request forms. "It is fast, fits well with working practices and ensures accuracy on the lab request form".

Final tests conducted at Charleston showed that the minimum data was correctly submitted with requests in 98% of cases (the remaining 2% was resolvable with further training). This startling improvement was immediate and achieved with minimal effort from the practice. It saved 5 – 6 hours per week over the original hand written procedure, whilst at the same time greatly reducing the possibility of error.

The success of the pilot resulted in LabelTrace being rolled out to all GP Practices in Argyll & Clyde. It is now used in most areas of Scotland, with over 4,000 printers in daily use in primary care treatment and consulting rooms. In collaboration with Quicktrace Ltd, Codegate Ltd is introducing LabelTrace into England and Wales. Further enhancements have been made to provide compatibility with all main GP administration systems and a number of trial sites are operating successfully.



This case study is based on information published by the ECCI team of NHS Argyll and Clyde and is used with their kind permission.



LabelTrace is developed by QuickTrace Ltd, Edinburgh.
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