

Software just what doctors ordered

Irish GP medical centres currently have the option of running one of four practice management systems, and among them is the independently developed CompleteGP

Carl Beame, who founded CompleteGP in 2006 and launched the software in 2008, said he initially wasn't trying to take on the market so much as solve a problem with an older software package that was slowing down.

"I got into this business to help out a GP friend," he said. "My intention wasn't to create a product, it was to fix a problem but we continued because we want to do the right thing clinically."

Since then, all of CompleteGP's competitors have come under the ownership of one multinational company, leaving CompleteGP as the only independently developed and fully-certified practice management system on offer to Ireland's 2,200-plus practices. It is fully interoperable with all relevant healthcare IT systems, and data protection compliant.

"Only nationally certified packages can use all the features available and we created the newest feature of electronic prescriptions which we developed and rolled out on a phase-one basis last De-

cember. Our GPs in the project are delighted to be using electronic prescriptions and able to throw away old dot matrix printers and unclutter surgeries and offices," he said.

Taking on global giants is a Herculean task, but CompleteGP's advantages stem from it being small and Irish. The company responds to the needs of Irish GPs and has worked to ensure certification takes account of what technology can offer practices. Its key selling point is its ability to reduce the workload of doctors, nurses and administrative staff.

For example, a GP who has a PCRS contract is required to record the work they have done. In some cases, this is used to reimburse for work performed.

"In CompleteGP with the patient record open, the user has, for clinical reasons, recorded the flu vaccine and batch number into the system," he said. "They then click the PCRS button, which automatically browses to the PCRS web page and logs in the GP, enters the patient GMS number, verifies the patient, selects the batch, fills in all

other fields, automatically downloads and prints the PDF document for patient signature. All the user needs to do is then click save to make the claim. This is done manually otherwise.

"This process also can also be automatically notified to the office PC and the support staff can be running the web automation before the patient leaves the consultation room."

Many more PCRS administration tasks are also automated by CompleteGP, including STC claims and patient registrations.

"Practice management is very complex in this day and age and to organise practices properly, we also have features where we internally contact PCRS's web page to import registration, accounting and payment information. We use this in a manner to produce automatic key practice indicators and give GPs oversight of their operation," said Beame.

CompleteGP also offers web-based access to records, enabling users to securely access health records on the go.

"We have the ability for GPs to access the patient record



Carl Beame, founder of CompleteGP

using a web browser on any device. For security reasons, we limit this to devices that have a security certificate created by the practice server," said Beame.

"In Ireland there is no centralised canonical medical record for an individual, and those that exist in hospital groups are mainly paper-based and almost never accessible in an emergency

(they are stored in Iron Mountain warehouses). The best canonical medical record for patients exists in primary care [GPs] where well over 90 per cent are running computerised systems.

"We have been investigating for years the best way to make these records available; firstly during an emergency and secondly when a patient is receiving secondary care in

a hospital.

"During an emergency the patient may not be conscious, and for secondary care, at each hospital appointment, they must inform the nurses of their allergies and prescriptions which can be very time consuming and may not be accurate if provided just by the patient.

"By combining our sister company SI-Key's patented

security device – that can be used on any device with a USB port without the need for additional software – with our web version of the patient record, we have been able to create a secure system where patients can access, within limits, their own record.

"For security the GP Practice server is not accessible to the internet, but connects to a central server which pass-

es very explicit data between the external browser and the practice database. Full control is maintained by our application running on the practice server and only appropriate information is transferred.

"CompleteGP has the ability to convert from our competitor's databases, allowing us to provide this same web-based patient access to medical records stored in any certified system."

The web display exactly matches the screens available in the main CompleteGP application.

CompleteGP codes all information and can use built-in and user-programmable medical calculators. These, along with user selectable labs and examinations, can be displayed in flowcharts similar to an Excel spreadsheet, with each row being a date in time. The calculators can be used automatically in letter templates and return text as well numbers.

"This has allowed users to create automated patient health check letters, and has been successfully used for employee-screening purposes, where the screening letter is automatically produced based on a template of functions," said Beame.

The end result is more streamlining and the easy presentation of complex medical data, an obvious benefit to already time-pressed primary care doctors and administration staff.

Online GP boosts health of firms

These days we are becoming more aware of the drain on our well-being that constant connection brings, and of the detrimental impact technology can have on personal interactions and family relationships. However, when applied constructively, technology adds huge value to our lives.

You'd be forgiven for not registering the level of technology we use in every aspect of life, and the choices we make based on access to it. Nearly every element of our day involves technology. If you are seeking a business connection the first step involves a phone or PC; the same goes for making a dinner reservation, taking a taxi, monitoring

the amount of steps you took today.

Health related technology is experiencing something of a revolution. In a global survey of 8,000 people, Accenture revealed that the number of consumers who use wearable devices or a mobile app for monitoring their health has doubled in the last two years.

Clearly the appetite for

combining health and technology is dramatically increasing, and for businesses this 'telehealth' is set to transform productivity and reduce absenteeism. One example is online doctor consultations. Employees will no longer need to take time off for the 70 per cent of conditions a GP can treat via an app or desktop programme.

According to a 2017 report by M3S and Morgan McKinley, millennials are expected to make up 75 per cent of the workforce by 2025, bringing with them attitudes shaped by the digital revolution. Therefore businesses need to develop strategies which particularly appeal.

And with, according to the same report, 33 per cent of millennials saying they are either "not happy at all" or "quite unhappy" in their current job, it's time for employers and business to act.

The United States is an early adopter of telehealth, as are Denmark, Finland and the UK. The US alone has seen a 10 per cent year-on-year increase in virtual consultations and user numbers are projected to reach 26.9 million by 2020.

With US employers projected to save \$6 billion per year by providing telemedicine technologies to their employees, it is no longer something Irish businesses can afford to ignore.

An Irish business providing 21st century healthcare is VideoDoc. Chief executive Mary O'Brien explained: "online GP consultations are the doctor's house call of the modern age; the new waiting room is the comfort of your home or office where, once registered, you'll wait approximately three minutes to be seen by an Irish Medical Council registered GP."

For companies there is a benefit to offering an on-demand GP service to employees. Sick days cost the Irish economy €1.5 billion a year and, with 11 million days lost to absenteeism every year, adding a GP consultation service means employees don't need to take time off to visit a clinic.

"Technology plays a part in the future of healthcare," said O'Brien. "However I never see an online doctor replacing GP practices. It's a complementary service and when practised in a safe and effective way can add value to the range of healthcare offerings in any business.

"At VideoDoc we offer the lowest cost for a corporate scheme; our subscriptions start from just €15 per person annually. This enables unlimited access to a GP consultation and medical advice 356 days a year any time, anywhere, even when travelling."

The best approach organi-



VideoDoc chief executive Mary O'Brien: Online doctors will never replace GP practices

sations can take is to embrace the revolution and adopt a strategy on telehealth. A Willis Towers Watson survey found

that more than one-third of large US companies now offer a telemedicine service to their employees. Wider access to

doctors can only be a positive and productive use of technology, benefiting the business and its employees.

PROFILE: DIACEUTICS

Putting medicine to the test

Irish company Diaceutics focuses on giving patients the best possible chance of benefiting from the right medication by ensuring they are tested correctly

Precision medicine has the potential to transform healthcare in the future. Earlier and better testing that enables patients to get the right drug at the right time may improve patient outcomes and can reduce the need for often costly late-stage disease management. Driving this change is Diaceutics, the Irish medtech company that drives better patient testing globally.

"Although precision medicine is already making a huge impact on people's lives, suboptimal diagnostic test practices mean that patients are missing out on potentially life-saving drugs. Our research results show that more than 156,000 cancer patients per year in the US and Europe are not receiving potentially lifesaving drugs because of imperfect testing. We provide pharmaceutical companies with valuable patient-testing data that helps them to identify and reach more patients who can benefit from these new personalised treatments," said Steve Vitale, managing director, marketing, Diaceutics.

"To date, we estimate that Diaceutics has improved testing for nearly 500,000 patients, giving them the best possible chance of benefiting from the right medication as identified by better diagnostic test results," he said.

Vitale continued: "Every year, 1.7 million cancer



Steve Vitale, managing director, marketing, Diaceutics

We provide pharmaceutical companies with valuable patient-testing data that helps them to identify and reach more patients who can benefit from these new personalised treatments

patients in the US and Europe undergo tests to determine whether or not there are novel precision drugs available that are likely to work better with their genetic make-up, compared to traditional therapies. However, substandard test availability information, as well as delayed reporting of test results, false negatives and sample management issues, means that patients are missing out.

"We estimate that the figures may be much higher, as this data doesn't take into account the number of patients that aren't tested at all. Our research has found that four years after new diagnostic tests become available, just 50 per cent of patients who may be eligible for precision drugs will have been tested by their physician," he explained.

"In oncology, for example, many of the patients that are tested for precision drugs are seriously ill. Traditionally, a patient suffering from breast cancer or leukaemia could be treated with a standard cocktail of drugs. We can eliminate the mystery behind knowing if a particular therapy may work or not by helping patients to get properly tested, which significantly increases the chances of being treated with the correct drug. Time is vital and physicians need to be able to see the results of those tests as soon as possible. Despite this urgency,

novel tests often suffer from issues which lead to patients missing out on the test, leading to them not having access to the drugs they may need and potentially facing a much longer treatment time with a bleaker prognosis.

"We recognised that closing the gap between the doctor, the lab and pharma was critical if diagnostic testing was to be effectively leveraged to help people get better quicker. So we embarked on a global effort to establish a network of laboratories that would be willing to share real-time testing information in order to improve patient care and elevate the effectiveness of the labs themselves. The data and analytical insights gained from this network of hundreds of laboratories around the globe helps our pharmaceutical clients to understand testing patterns and more effectively integrate proper diagnostic testing into patients' treatment," Vitale said.

"Medicine is going to become increasingly reliant on diagnostics in the future. In the next 48 months, some 300 new test-dependent drugs or indications will be brought to market. We therefore need to make sure that labs, pathologists, physicians and pharma companies are perfectly aligned to prepare for this dynamic and ensure patients are receiving the specific drug that may potentially save their lives."



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