

Palliative Care

Palliative Care patients in Cwm Taf health board are amongst the first patients to benefit from a new service which allows clinicians to see blood test results of patients no matter where in Wales the tests were taken. The Welsh Results Reports Service (part of the Welsh Clinical Portal) has prevented unnecessary hospital visits, and has saved patients from having duplicate blood tests.

"It helps me make decisions"

Palliative doctors care for the terminally ill and their families, focusing on providing patients with comfort and dignity. Palliative Care Consultant Dr Victoria Wheatley is part of a team covering the whole of South East Wales. Before the introduction of the Results Service she had to search for patient test results in different systems; or by phoning hospitals or GP practices, and if she couldn't find the results she had to arrange for patients to have the tests taken again. She explained:

"Within the team that I work in, many of our patients have cancer, and cancer treatments in south wales are provided in lots of different places, they're provided in Cwm Taf hospitals, Cardiff and Vale hospitals, Velindre, Swansea, and Gwent, and before, when we were trying to work out what had happened to a patient, or what the outcome was of an appointment they'd had earlier in the week we would have to look in loads of different places

"so now it's fantastic, if a patient tells me they had a blood test in such-and-such a hospital when they attended clinic 3 days ago I can look that up on the computer and I can find it out and it helps me make decisions, it also prevents me having to take blood again so it's much sleeker, it's much smoother, its presented in a way that's really easy to use, so it's really making a difference".

Focus on the patient's comfort and dignity

Part of Dr Wheatley's work is providing 'out-of-hours' care to patients. She has phone calls from GPs and hospices outside of normal working hours, and has to make decisions on the best care options for patients. Having the test results immediately available has been a huge help:

"Last time I was on call I had a phone call from a GP wanting to bring a patient into one of the hospices, the patient had changed over the weekend, and I needed to make a decision about whether they should go for investigation to a hospital or whether they should go to the hospice. The hospice would obviously be the nicest environment and would be able to provide more emotional support for the patient and the relatives, and it was really useful... I logged on, I looked up, I could see that the GP had taken bloods on Thursday there was nothing particularly worrying about the bloods and in fact they were very much in keeping with the ones the patient had had before, because I could also see the previous ones, so it was a very easy decision to say, you know, this patient can go to the hospice, we can focus on the patient's comfort and dignity and review things

in the morning, and we don't need to clog up the hospital with somebody who doesn't want to be there, and doesn't need to be there"

Service available everywhere during 2017

The Welsh Results Reports Service was introduced into Cwm Taf in November 2016. Pathology results are the first set of results to be available, and will be followed by radiology and other diagnostic areas over forthcoming months. Dr Wheatley is excited by the prospect of what's to come:

"The really exciting thing will be the letters, the ECGs, neurosurgery...I'm really excited by the end game"

The roll out of the service to other health boards across Wales has begun and the service will be available everywhere later this year.