



Dr Ramesh Raja with (in foreground) the upgraded version of PACS showing two chest examinations and (in background) the older PACS system showing an image of a pelvis with a hip replacement

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50,000 IMAGES AND COUNTING ON £1.75 MILLION ELECTRONIC X-RAY SYSTEM AT ROCHDALE INFIRMARY

There are now nearly 50,000 patient examinations on the upgraded electronic X-ray system at Rochdale Infirmary.

The hospital's computerised X-ray system recently underwent a £1.75 million upgrade to prepare it for linking to the new national NHS network.

Introducing a nationally-linked Picture Archive and Communications System (PACS) is a key part of the NHS National Programme for Information Technology.

Instead of the traditional X-ray films, which are viewed on white light boxes, PACS uses a digital image, which can be seen on computer screens.

Rochdale Infirmary first moved from traditional X-ray films to PACS in 2001 but it needed the recent upgrade to be compatible with the new national system.

Hundreds of staff, including doctors and radiographers, have received training in using the enhanced system.

Consultant radiologist Dr Ramesh Raja, site lead for radiology at Rochdale Infirmary, said: "This new PACS upgrade brings our systems into the 21st

Century. It enables us to magnify and manipulate images to highlight areas of interest. It is very quick and responsive and one click of the button means that you can review patient images and reports.

“Because it’s computer-based and images are digitised, images can be quickly shared with colleagues if we need their opinion to help with a diagnosis. Also, if a patient has to re-attend hospital then there is instant access to their previous images. It enables clinicians to send images instantly to each other to discuss patients’ diagnosis and to work with the images.”

Robert Dixon, PACS manager at Rochdale Infirmary, said: “The upgraded system has several advantages, including allowing clinicians to compare two scans on the screen at once.

“It also means that when PACS is operational across the country we can exchange images with any hospital anywhere in the country in seconds.”

The upgrade is part of a £9 million investment in PACS across all four hospitals run by Pennine Acute Trust – Rochdale Infirmary, Bury’s Fairfield General Hospital, The Royal Oldham Hospital and North Manchester General Hospital.

The investment in the new technology will play a key part in helping the hospitals ensure that all patients can be seen within 18 weeks from GP referral by the end of 2008.

Dr Mahesh Kumar, Pennine Acute Trust’s clinical director for radiology, said: “We are really excited about being able to offer the benefits of PACS to patients and staff at all of our hospitals. Rochdale Infirmary is not new to PACS and the enhanced system will give uniformity with the other systems installed across the Trust.

“PACS also has spin-off results, such as fewer appointments being cancelled, postponed or delayed due to misplaced images. The ease of access could also reduce delays in discharge for some patients. A lot of people have worked very hard on the project at Rochdale Infirmary, and I would like to thank everyone involved.”

John Saxby, chief executive of Pennine Acute Trust, said: “Clinicians need the very best equipment to provide the very best care. Our substantial investment in this state-of-the-art system underlines our commitment to giving patients access to quick and quality treatment. This is really good news for those attending Rochdale Infirmary.”

Notes to editors

1. PACS has replaced all X-rays at Rochdale Infirmary with the exception of mammograms and some dental X-rays.

2. All hospitals in Pennine Acute Trust have now got PACS. Rochdale Infirmary and Fairfield General Hospital had an earlier version that needed upgrading to be compatible with the new national system. Neither The Royal Oldham Hospital nor North Manchester General Hospital had PACS before.
3. For further information please contact Richard Toms, communications officer, Pennine Acute Trust, on tel: 0161 918 4285.
4. Pennine Acute Trust runs Bury's Fairfield General Hospital, North Manchester General Hospital, The Royal Oldham Hospital, Rochdale Infirmary and also has services at Birch Hill Hospital.
5. All Pennine Acute press notices and other media information is available from: www.pat.nhs.uk/media