

CASE STUDY:

HOW ACCESSING CONSULTANT CONNECT FROM A COMPUTER IS SUPPORTING CLINICIANS IN POWYS TEACHING HEALTH BOARD

Since 2020, Powys Teaching Health Board has had **access to over 30 specialties for Enhanced Advice & Guidance via Consultant Connect**, linking clinicians with specialists via telephone, photos and messaging.

More recently, the Desktop Calling feature was launched, enabling NHS clinicians in participating areas to make calls for specialist input via their computers. The functionality was designed to enable users working in areas with poor mobile signal to access timely advice, with the additional benefit of **allowing clinicians to manage Consultant Connect activity from one place**. Clinicians simply log in to Consultant Connect in their browser using their credentials for the app or sign up using their NHS email address.

To date, more than **400 calls have been made** using the Desktop Calling feature, with queries answered within **33 seconds** on average. Following the launch of Desktop Calling, we spoke with Hannah Meredith, Urgent Care Practitioner in Dyfi Valley Health, a general practice in Powys, to find out how making calls via her desktop benefits her and her patients.

Powys Teaching Health Board stats*:



287 calls made



104 photos taken



358 messages sent



70% of patients avoided an unnecessary hospital visit

*Data from January - June 2024.

Why did you start using the Desktop Calling feature?

'I frequently use the Teledermatology Messaging Advice & Guidance service, which I choose to access via Consultant Connect in my browser because I can keep it in an open tab whenever needed. I then realised that **via my browser I could also make calls for specialist advice, which is fantastic** because we don't have signal in the hospital, and our mobile phones are reliant on the Wi-Fi, which can be unpredictable.'

How does making calls for Advice & Guidance from your desktop benefit you and your patients?

'Due to the poor mobile service at the hospital, before the introduction of Desktop Calling, I would've had to go outside and call via the app or locate a landline to call the Dial-In Number, both of which would've been more time-consuming. **Seeking advice using the Desktop Calling feature is super quick, easy to navigate, and is a really useful addition to the service.**

'The first time I used Desktop Calling was to contact Microbiology to query an alternative treatment for an expensive medication. I was connected to the consultant immediately, and they gave me sound advice, making the process easier and smoother.'

Hannah's job role also means she sees many patients with very visual conditions in their presentation. So, she is also an avid user of Messaging Advice & Guidance via Consultant Connect. The service enables her to **quickly send messages and securely attach patient files**, supporting her in providing the best care:



Patient Examples

Rheumatology

'A patient presented with intermittent random swelling to her fingers for the past 15 years, which she noticed started happening after the birth of her youngest child. At the time, she was seen by a vascular specialist who conducted scans, which were reported as unremarkable. She came to see us last week because her finger had swelled four times in 24 hours, which was even more unusual. She was understandably worried because it was blue in colour and throbbed.

With the patient's consent, **I used Consultant Connect to take and send her photos and clinical history to a rheumatology specialist.** The consultant replied, saying that she suffered from the same condition, known as Achenbach's syndrome, and that the patient didn't need any treatment. I had never heard of this condition before, but **I was so surprised at the quickness of the reply, which came through within an hour of the initial message.** For the patient, it was reassuring that it was nothing sinister and she was so grateful.'

Dermatology

'The biggest benefit of Consultant Connect is the **access to swift dermatological advice.** When seeing patients with lesions, it is not always clear which ones are benign, so Dermatology Messaging Advice & Guidance is a lifeline. Because of the hospital's geographical location, our nearest dermatology clinic is a three-hour round-trip, and **this service has prevented a huge number of unnecessary referrals.** I take the patient photos using a dermatoscope and upload them to my computer, where I can safely attach them to the Consultant Connect message in my browser.

The dermatology team always replies so quickly and often after working hours, meaning I can action the responses the next working day. If I didn't have access to Dermatology Messaging Advice & Guidance, all patients with ambiguous skin lesions would either need to have their images forwarded by email, which would take much longer, or I would need to refer them as a safety precaution. It prevents patients from needing to travel long distances for unneeded appointments and helps us prepare patients as much as possible for those requiring a referral. **There are no negatives to using Consultant Connect: it's brilliant and straightforward to sign up and use.'**

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