



Three partners with the Health Service Executive

to provide secure email for healthcare professionals



A fully encrypted communications platform for medical professionals has improved collaboration, user satisfaction, regulatory compliance and above all, patient care.

Challenge

Modern healthcare often calls for a team approach. Caring for patients with chronic or multiple illnesses can involve a combination of GP, practice nurse, social worker, physiotherapist, consultant and hospital staff. Since caregivers are based in different locations, email is ideal for quick and effective communication. The healthcare sector has been cautious in adoption of email, due to understandable concerns about sharing sensitive patient information via a potentially unsecure channel.

Some web-based messaging has been possible since 1995, when the Health Service Executive (HSE) began using the Healthlink service. This allowed for the secure sharing of certain types of 'structured' clinical patient information like radiology scans and lab reports. Until 2014 however, there was no equivalent service for other communication among healthcare professionals. This led to a continued reliance on paper, post and fax.

Solution

In 2014, Three and the HSE co-developed a secure email service called Healthmail. Healthmail allows healthcare providers to easily and safely share clinical patient information with colleagues in primary and secondary care. It does this through a bounded network that is only open to approved participants. Here, messages travel across an encrypted TLS link between approved mail servers. The system also automatically blocks communication with public email services like Gmail to ensure the patient data confidentiality.

Since its launch, Healthmail has grown to more than 5,500 users. This includes 2,600 GPs, 700 practice staff, 1,800 pharmacies, and numerous nursing homes and optometry practices.



Healthmail usage has increased significantly since the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) came into force in 2018. The regulation deems the organisation controlling the data responsible for its protection and safety. This prompted more healthcare professionals to ensure compliance by availing of Healthmail's secure, encrypted email service.

"Together with Three, we have hugely expanded the number of hospitals and healthcare agencies securely connected to Healthmail. As a result, we are seeing more and more electronic communication among primary and secondary care providers. We are also looking at expanding Healthmail to additional user groups next year," says Healthmail operations manager Karina Hull.

Results

A service evaluation revealed that 81% of Healthmail users said they would like to see the service continue and 61% believe it improves patient care. Users highlighted several benefits, including confidence in security, saved time and improved communication. The evaluation also found that Healthmail fulfils its aim of sending patient information confidentially and that security is one of the primary reasons behind its steady rise in users since launch.

Summing up Three's service before, during and after the launch of Healthmail, Karina had one word to describe the transformation: "Amazing." Three's Customer Care Centre in Limerick provides technical assistance to Healthmail users and Three's Healthmail account manager, Catriona Murphy, is proactive in the ongoing support and development of the solution. "Catriona foresees a problem and comes up with a solution and is excellent at finding ways to use the technology that Three has, to continually improve Healthmail," says Karina.

"The evaluation has shown that Healthmail has greatly improved the efficiency and safety of healthcare communication. The reduction of faxes and phone calls, not only saves time but lowers costs and most importantly secures health information as it travels between healthcare providers," concludes Karina.

Call our Business Team on 1800 200 017

www.three.ie/business