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eCaseNotes: A User-Friendly Path to Paperless Healthcare

In February 2016, Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt announced a plan to invest £4.2 billion in modern technologies and techniques with the goal to make the NHS paperless by 2020. The digitisation and elimination of paper from healthcare interactions will help increase system efficiencies and patient outcomes.

However, going paperless is easier said than done. It takes more than new technology to make this vision a reality. It requires a complete cultural change.

Achieving technology interoperability is just one challenge that needs to be addressed to create a paperless NHS. Another, far more difficult, obstacle to overcome is the change in clinical workflow a switch to digital technologies often requires.

Clinicians have used paper and pen to document their patient interactions since the beginning of modern medicine. This practice is familiar and comfortable. Requiring them to abandon this technique in favor of a digital data entry process which is foreign to them will be difficult for many clinicians to embrace. The change will likely disrupt their workflow and slow them down. Some fear the change will negatively impact their relationships with patients. As a result, many clinicians forcefully resist technology adoption. To avoid this inevitable conflict, healthcare providers should strive to implement digital technologies that keep clinician change to a minimum, allowing them to maintain their existing workflow practices. This is exactly why Lexmark Healthcare developed its Paperlite eCaseNotes solution.
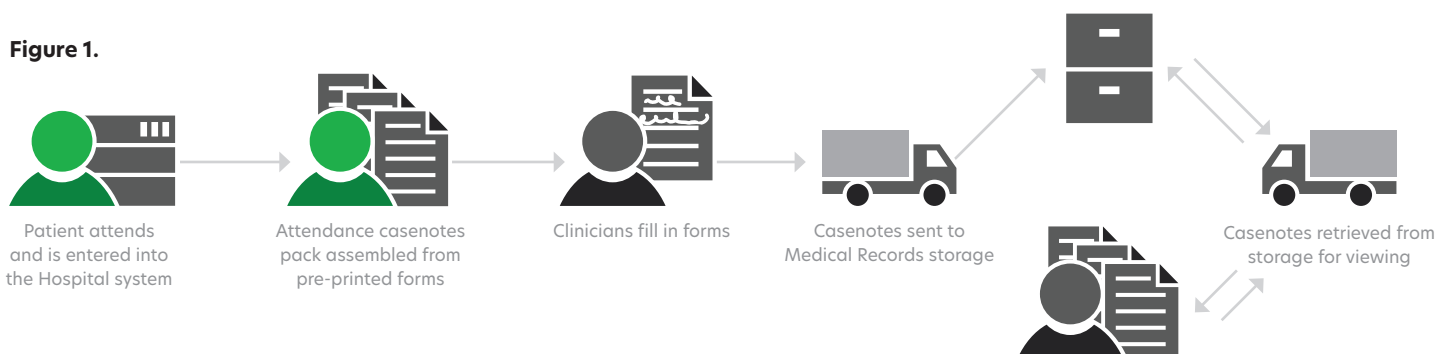
Current case note processes too paper-intensive, inefficient

Nowhere in a healthcare organisation is the use of paper more prevalent than in the patient case note process. **Figure 1** illustrates a typical existing case note workflow in a hospital. In this common scenario, when a patient arrives at the facility their personal information is entered into a PAS (patient administration system) and an attendance pack is assembled using pre-printed forms. The clinician then fills out these forms during a patient encounter using a pen. Newer case notes are typically kept in an onsite records room, while older noted are stored in an offsite storage facility. In either scenario, the process generates huge amounts of paper.

This paper-intensive process is teeming with shortcomings and inefficiencies. It requires expensive pre-printed stationary. Manual labor is required to assemble the attendance packs. Paper case note volumes increase with each patient encounter. Expensive onsite and offsite physical storage space is required to house the case notes. Transportation is often required to ship and retrieve historical case notes to and from offsite storage facilities. Paper case notes can only be in one place at a time, can easily be lost or misplaced and are often difficult to read. The list goes on and on.

Figure 1.

Patient attends and is entered into the Hospital system

Attendance casenotes pack assembled from pre-printed forms

Clinicians fill in forms

Casenotes sent to Medical Records storage

Casenotes retrieved from storage for viewing

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There are obviously countless ways digital technologies can help streamline and improve the case note process. The problem is most of them require clinicians to abandon their current pen-and-paper based workflow and adopt software that can be difficult to navigate, requires computerized data entry and reduces face time with patients. This trade-off is a deal-breaker for many clinicians.

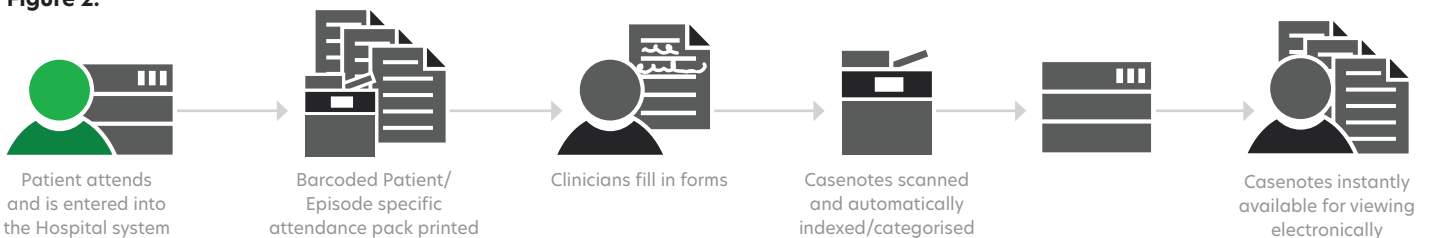## Paperlite eCaseNotes — a paperless technology designed with clinicians in mind

Clinician buy-in is crucial to successful technology adoption and ensuring existing clinical workflows aren't disrupted is key to securing physician buy-in. Realizing this, Lexmark Healthcare has developed Paperlite eCaseNotes. This revolutionary technology solution puts healthcare organizations on a path to becoming paperless while allowing clinicians to maintain their pen-and-paper-based case note workflow process.

Paperlite eCaseNotes combines Lexmark's MFP (multifunction printer) devices, intelligent data capture and ECM (enterprise content management) technologies to streamline case note assembly, completion and conversion to electronic image without impacting a physician's daily routine. **Figure 2** illustrates the Paperlite eCaseNote workflow.

Rather than requiring personnel to manually assemble attendance packs using pre-printed forms, Paperlite eCaseNotes automatically transmits the patient information to a Lexmark forms server. The forms server then prompts a Lexmark MFP to print an attendance pack consisting of the appropriate forms, each of which contains an intelligent barcode. This pack is then passed to the clinician, who fills them out by hand as they always have. The completed forms are then scanned back into a Lexmark MFP and each form is automatically indexed into the ECM system based on the information contained in the intelligent barcode. A digital image of each patient documents within case note is then stored in the ECM system, categorized into the relevant section, and the paper used to collect the information is shredded and recycled.

The resulting eCaseNote can now be accessed via the EHR (electronic health record) system, helping to complete the patient record. Furthermore, the electronic file can be accessed simultaneously by requesters, are quickly retrievable using search technology and are protected from loss by IT security and disaster recovery policies. The hospital can then seamlessly move to eForm workflow to eliminate the paper part of the process as clinicians become more comfortable entering data electronically.

Figure 2.

Patient attends and is entered into the Hospital system → Barcoded Patient/ Episode specific attendance pack printed → Clinicians fill in forms → Casenotes scanned and automatically indexed/categorised → Casenotes instantly available for viewing electronically

Finally, there's a paperless strategy that clinicians can champion. Discover how Paperlite eCaseNotes can help you get paperless by 2020.

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