

A haematology landmark: the Kettering experience

A milestone event for haematology automation took place in Kettering recently, but to the biomedical scientists this represented so much more than simple numerical success, as Simon Kimber explains.

Since the launch of the XN haematology solution in 2011 the UK market has witnessed an unprecedented response to the latest innovative development in the Sysmex haematology product line. So much so that just a few months ago the 100th XN system was installed at Kettering General Hospital, which represented a significant upgrade for the East Midlands site.

Intelligent design

The rapid uptake of this innovative haematology solution reflects the advanced specification of the hardware and software, something that haematology manager Mike Silverstone endorses: "We were familiar with the Sysmex fully automated solutions, having used one for many years, so we wanted to take the opportunity to continue that relationship

and increase productivity in the haematology laboratory. The XN solution offers us significant improvements and features that have made a big difference to the way we run the laboratory."

The XN series solution is a scalable and flexible combination of the most advanced fluorescence flow cytometric haematology analysers, automated slide preparation and stainer, fully-automated erythrocyte sedimentation rate (ESR) system and tube sorter. All of this is delivered in a design that is appealing, compact and easy on the eye, but the design of the system's 'intelligence' is also worthy of mention with automatic reflex and rerun inbuilt to the system, which enhances the 'walkaway' time of the XN solution and creates more hands-free benefits.

Little intervention needed

The new solution that Kettering General Hospital has opted for includes three XN haematology full blood count analysers, an automated slide maker and stainer, fully automated ESR system and a tube sorter. The latter additions have had a significant impact on the level of staffing required to run the routine haematology workload, as Mike is keen to point out: "We now only require two whole-time equivalent (WTE) medical laboratory assistants to look after the routine haematology workload, and that includes running the XN system. This is very timely as we, like many other laboratories, are facing a staff shortage and so the additional labour-saving benefits of the XN solution have come at the perfect time.

"Very little intervention is required to process the main workload and with the reduction in reagent volumes on the XN analysers there is even less time spent changing reagents." Mike goes on to emphasise the time-saving benefits of the XN when he adds: "The biggest bonus has been the impact of the tube sorter (TS1000), which means we spend a lot less time 'hunting' for samples that require further testing. The tube sorter makes the process so much easier and we are all grateful for that."

'The scalability and flexibility of the Sysmex XN mean that the haematology laboratory in a hospital such as Kettering General can enjoy the benefits that systemisation creates'



The XN series solution is a scalable and flexible combination of fluorescence flow cytometric haematology analysers, automated slide preparation and stainer, fully-automated ESR system and tube sorter.

Prince in Wales: evaluating implementation

Pathology services are under increasing pressure currently from various challenges and drivers. These include the need to save money, the necessity to continue delivering a safe and effective service to clinicians with diminishing resources, and the ongoing need to comply with Clinical Pathology Accreditation (CPA) guidelines. Additionally, many laboratories are now undergoing the move towards a rationalised pathology service and find themselves in a significant period of

transition as they seek to implement a 'hub and spoke' solution across multiple sites.

In the Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board (ABM UHB), an amalgamation of the former local NHS trusts at Swansea and Bridgend, undertook a consolidation of four pathology services at Morriston Hospital, Singleton Hospital, Neath Port Talbot Hospital and The Princess of Wales Hospital at Bridgend. To add to the challenges faced by the pathology services, there was a procurement project undertaken

by the haematology department that was reaching its conclusion after a long and difficult process.

Rationalisation and transition are becoming ever more common terms found in the pathology lexicon. In a recent issue of *The Biomedical Scientist* ('Prince in Wales: Evaluating Implementation Case study', February 2014, page 70), Simon Kimber reported on the PRINCE2 approach to change adopted by workers in South Wales.

Remote technical support

Another common requirement that Kettering shares is the need for reliability in its chosen solution. Mike Silverstone has further cause to be pleased with his experience so far: "The new system has proven to be very reliable. This is even more important now that we have fewer staff available to intervene if there is a technical issue, so reliability is more important than ever for us." The reliability of the system is enhanced by the Sysmex UK service support and the option of SNCS whereby Sysmex technical support personnel can monitor the XN operating conditions remotely online and identify potential issues before they arise.

Scalability and flexibility

Mike Silverstone is aware of the changing landscape of pathology services and the need for future-proofing his laboratory to ensure that the haematology services at Kettering General Hospital remain effective and deliver an excellent service to its users. The establishment of a centralised blood sciences laboratory is one possibility on the horizon and the acquisition of the XN solution can only add value to such a development.

While Kettering General Hospital may not be a large university hospital in a major city, it is nevertheless a busy centre providing an essential service to the clinicians and patients in the hospital and

'Automatic reflex and rerun are inbuilt to the system, which enhances the walkaway time of the XN solution and creates more hands-free benefits'

in the community. The XN solution from Sysmex offers scalability and flexibility such that the haematology laboratory in a hospital such as Kettering General can enjoy the benefits that systemisation creates in a laboratory; benefits that are passed on to staff, clinicians and patients.

About Sysmex

Sysmex UK is the distributor and support network for Sysmex automated haematology and coagulation diagnostic analysers, reagents and information systems for laboratories and healthcare facilities within the UK and Ireland. Sysmex has also become a world leader in systematisation, providing solutions to streamline and improve the workflow of the busiest laboratories. In addition to instrumentation, the company develops many different reagents essential for diagnostic testing. Core expertise in haematology, haemostasis, systemisation and reagent development is the driving force behind Sysmex's global business activities and has been the basis of a steady expansion into the UK's growing point-of-care testing market.

PIP

For further information please contact:
 Sysmex UK
 Sysmex House, Garamonde Drive
 Wymbush, Milton Keynes MK8 8DF
 Tel: 0870 902 9210
 Email: info@sysmex.co.uk
 Web: www.sysmex.co.uk



While Kettering General Hospital may not be a large university hospital in a major city, it is nevertheless a busy centre providing an essential service to the clinicians and patients.