

UpToDate measurably impacts decision-making for junior and senior doctors



The aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in restructured priorities and a renewed focus on education at Barking, Havering and Redbridge University Hospitals Trust (BHRUT).

BHRUT employs 8,500 people and operates from two main sites — King George Hospital in Goodmayes and Queen’s Hospital in Romford — and has two of the busiest emergency departments in London.

Lifelong learning

Junior clinicians were particularly disadvantaged during the pandemic. Dr. John Brecknell, Director of Medical Education, explains that “we had built up a deficit of training over two years, and instead of easing, it was deepening.” The Trust’s decision to invest in UpToDate® was partly driven by a desire to help clinicians get back on track with Continuous Professional Development (CPD).

BHRUT Medical Education Teaching Fellow Senel Hazal has experienced how UpToDate can support junior doctors, with both education and working on the wards. “The hospital is extremely busy, and sometimes when you need a specific answer quickly, no one’s nearby. UpToDate helps to bridge that gap,” she says. And sometimes clinicians just want confirmation they have the latest evidence. “If I need a refresher on a certain topic, it’s as easy as getting my phone out on the way to see my patient,” she adds.



But the benefits of UpToDate are not exclusive to junior doctors: “Some of our most avid advocates are our consultants,” says Dr. Brecknell. “If you stop learning when training ends, then it won’t be long before your knowledge becomes redundant.”

Senior Doctor Rajith De Silva, who works in the Trust’s neurology department, uses UpToDate to get reliable, detailed information from the tool’s 7,000+ expert contributors. “If I’ve got a really difficult neuropathy case, I’ll phone colleagues to get their opinion. UpToDate works in a similar ‘phone-a-friend’ way: It offers a professorial consultation, granting me access to insights from clinicians around the world whose guidance I would otherwise have little exposure to.”



Healthcare Equity

Ensuring healthcare equity is also a pressing issue for BHRUT, which serves three of London's most diverse boroughs. "Having access to the same decision-making tools across the system is one way of starting to address inequalities," says Dr. Brecknell.

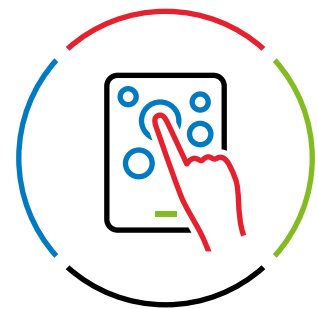
With bias-free content that is sensitive to ethnic differences, UpToDate can help to reverse the trend of minorities receiving different standards of care. Sickle Cell Disease (SCD) is a hereditary condition that is more prevalent among people from African or African-Caribbean origin. Equipping clinicians at BHRUT with the latest evidence-based recommendations for treating SCD is just one example of how UpToDate can boost healthcare equity.

The impact of UpToDate

Dr. De Silva says it's an "amazing privilege" to use a tool which helps him reduce errors, cut delays, and ultimately improve health outcomes for patients. He believes that UpToDate has made a "palpable difference" in improving health outcomes and enhancing clinical efficiency at the Trust.

Analysis of usage of UpToDate at BHRUT shows the important role it plays. Between September 2023 and September 2024, referring to UpToDate resulted in nearly 3,000 clinical decisions being revised in the face of the evidence presented. It also led to reinforcing more than 6,500 decisions about which a degree of uncertainty existed.

From reactivating learning and training opportunities, to addressing health inequities, to advancing the Trust's digital maturity, UpToDate has played an important role in helping clinicians at BHRUT make safe, confident decisions. Because every decision counts.



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