

Enable increased theatre throughput and improved surgical performance from Opera OR management

NHS Fife is one of 14 Health Boards serving the community of NHS Scotland.

A national implementation of Opera in 2010 standardised theatre management across the majority of the country. For NHS Fife it has helped to increase theatre capacity and meet the increasing demands of an ageing population.

Real-time theatre information and scheduling has also helped boost trust in data and reduce cancellations. Greater visibility of what is happening in the next hour and week helps to maximise OR capacity.

Furthermore, accurate and detailed information on the length of procedures or amount of materials used can help to enhance the performance of surgical staff.

In summary:

- 19 theatres across 2 sites monitored in real-time
- Approximately 22% increase in theatre efficiency as measured by theatre utilisation
- Theatres now planning ahead, not just reporting on what has been done
- Fewer data inputting errors – data pulled from waiting lists
- Accurate and transparent data driving improved performance
- Clear visibility of overrunning or early finishing cases to prevent bottlenecks
- Predictive schedule management helps prevent cancellations
- Standardised theatre data across participating boards in Scotland
- Potential to gain financial benefits from materials management



NHS Fife has improved theatre efficiency from 67% to 89%

“As populations age there is increasing demand on theatres. Every year of life expectancy raises the need for surgical procedures and the nature of complexity. One of the choke points in meeting this demand is theatre capacity.



Our target was to increase the amount of staff time in theatre by a modest 10% - we gained a 22% increase in efficiency by using Opera.”

Peter Curry
Consultant Anaesthetist, Clinical Lead for NHS Fife and Clinical Lead for Theatres Procurement for NHS Scotland



Improved OR efficiency has been achieved from the installation of Opera at NHS Fife. A 22% increase in efficiency means that more procedures are being undertaken and that more patients are being seen during the working day.

With improved planning and scheduling from Opera, NHS Fife has been able to successfully tackle the increased demand on its theatres. This means that a need to increase theatre capacity by extending weekday or weekend hours has largely been avoided.

“The recording of information in a live environment means that fewer inputting errors occur and surgeons have more confidence in the data – this can help improve performance.”

*Peter Curry
Consultant Anaesthetist,
Clinical Lead for NHS Fife and Clinical Lead for
Theatres Procurement for NHS Scotland*

Transparency of accurate data helps to improve surgical performance

Opera is a scheduling and data analysis solution for Operating Rooms looking to maximise efficiency. It not only covers the planning of preoperative processes from surgery requests and waiting lists to scheduling the final OR list, but also records, validates and archives data for statistical reporting.

“We’ve driven the recording of information into a live environment with Opera as opposed to filling out paper forms,” states Dr Peter Curry, Consultant Anaesthetist at NHS Fife. “When you record as it happens, fewer inputting errors occur and people have more confidence in the data.”

He continues, “For example, a surgeon may say that a hernia procedure took approximately 1 hour 20 minutes, but this may only be the time they start and finish the procedure. They do not anticipate the time it takes to anaesthetise the patient, take the patient back to recovery and to clean up between procedures. The Opera system can tell you how long things have taken to help anticipate the future.”

“Importantly surgeons believe the data. By their very nature they are top performers aspiring to be the best, so if you tell someone based on recorded information that they are taking longer than others in certain procedures, they look to improve utilisation performance.”

Live overview of scheduling helps to reduce cancellations

“Opera has allowed us to see where lists are finishing early or overrunning so that we can move things around to prevent cancellations,” states Dr Curry.

Opera works in real-time giving a helicopter view on workstation monitors of all activity taking place in operating theatres across the health establishment. By having clear visibility to pre-empt bottlenecks, OR workflow is smoother.

Financial benefits can be gained via materials management module

Once the key utilisation benefits of theatres have been addressed by Opera, the material management module offers the potential to deliver financial returns. This can include freeing up capital tied up in stock, reducing waste and gaining supplier discounts.

“There are financial benefits of doing more with the materials management module if you have the resources,” concludes Dr Peter Curry. “By being able to plan and anticipate needs in more detail there is potential to reduce stock on shelves, not only freeing up space in store rooms but also reducing capital tied up. For example, instead of £3 million of stock on shelf, it could be reduced to £1 million. There may also be small financial gains from lower delivery costs by placing orders 7 days in advance rather than 48 hours, plus less waste from materials going out of date as needs are better anticipated.”

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