

# Teledialysis – knowledge transfer between Norway and Scotland

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## Background

The **Competitive Health Services** project seeks to improve access to healthcare for residents of sparsely populated areas in northern Europe by learning from existing experience and making maximum use of innovative eHealth solutions.

The project has identified several applications as suitable for transfer between Finland, Norway, Sweden and Scotland and is now establishing these at pilot sites in the host countries.

## Why?

Renal services in northern Norway and northern Scotland face similar challenges:

- Scattered rural populations
- Remote satellite dialysis units managed from urban specialist centres
- Increasing numbers of patients with renal disease
- Cost of travel (in time and cash) for health staff and patients
- Need for closer communication between sites – to support patient care and increase the skills of remote staff
- Winter weather conditions

## What?

Mobile video conferencing units used by NHS Highland renal service for:

- Regular staff updates each week between Raigmore and Wick
- Inclusion of Wick nurses in the clinical education programme offered at Raigmore
- Live review consultations between dialysis patients and consultants in alternate months, with potential to expand to remote reviews for selected outpatients
- Involvement of the whole multi-disciplinary team in live patient links – dieticians, pharmacists, physiotherapist
- Urgent consultations as needed

The technology itself is not new, but rather the focus on multiple use.

## Where?

### Norway

A well-established service links the university hospital in Tromsø with small remote dialysis units at Alta (408 km), Hammarfest (548 km), Kirkenes (806 km)

### Scotland

New service introduced between Raigmore Hospital, Inverness and Caithness General Hospital, Wick (165 km)

## When?

**2009** Interchange of information and experience between Norway and NHS Highland, culminating in a visit to Tromsø and Alta by NHS Highland renal staff

**2010** March – start of video transmissions between Raigmore and Wick. Use of video conferencing is expected to have become an accepted element of normal service delivery by late 2010

## How?

- Qualitative and quantitative measures used to measure services in terms of patient and staff satisfaction, clinical and cost effectiveness
- Interviews with healthcare staff structured using the eHIT (eHealth Implementation Toolkit) developed to assess the 'normalisation' (potential and actual) of innovative health services, by paying careful attention to human and organisational factors

## Benefits

### More...

- Outpatient appointments available at the monthly Wick renal clinics
- Access by patients to dietetic, pharmacy and physiotherapy services
- Opportunity to resolve medical and vascular access issues by remote assessment
- Support and training for satellite nurses

### Less...

- Travel for patients and NHS Highland staff

## References

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