

Further information can be obtained by contacting the following people:

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This leaflet is available in large print, please contact:

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Department of Radiology

Information for Patients

Digital storage of your medical images (PACS)

Background

The Department of Health is sponsoring the use of computer-based applications in health care. There are several examples of this but one of them affects the way hospital X-ray departments process x-rays and scans. All your x-ray images obtained from now on will be stored on a digital database.

In the past there were instances where your images may have been inadvertently sent to the wrong place or sometimes even mislaid. This new database means that doctors and nurses can look at your images on a computer display at any time, anywhere and the images will never get lost.

Can anyone look at my X-rays and scans (images)?

No. The NHS has a legal duty to keep information about you confidential. Only the staff directly involved in looking after you are allowed to look at your images. Access to the database is controlled by tightly governed passwords, available to certain staff only.

Where is the database held?

There are two. One is at Derriford Hospital and the second one used for backup purposes is at a secure location outside the hospital.

Can anyone outside Devon view my images?

The new digital system has two main benefits. One is to stop your images going to the wrong place, as described above. The other is to allow your medical X-ray 'history' to follow you around the country. So for example, if you had a car accident in Manchester, the doctors who might need to treat you there would easily be able to request your previous x-rays in order to best direct your future care. This almost never happens at present.

These out of county doctors and nurses are governed by similarly rigorous security arrangements and again can only look at your images if they are directly involved in your care.

We are a Teaching Hospital, hence your images may be used for teaching medical students, doctors and other health professionals. They may also be used for audit process to help maintain the quality of care.

Who controls the database?

At the local level, the local Caldicott Guardian governs patient information sharing. This is a high-ranking member of staff who has a statutory duty to ensure that patient data is properly and securely managed.

At the national level, your data is controlled by Connecting for Health. This is the government agency that is in charge of the new digital X-ray system.

Can I ask not to have my information stored on the database?

Yes, you can but this is likely to mean we are unable to perform your x-ray or scan in the first place. To make the digital system workable it has to be able to identify you with your x-ray. If you don't want to share your information the system doesn't know whom the image belongs to and won't accept it.