Medics’ cash-saving pilot set for national roll-out

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The scheme, which last week won an “improving value through innovation” award from the Health Care Supply Association (HCSA), was launched between the East of England Ambulance Service NHS Trust (EEAST), Cambridge University Hospitals (CUH) NHS Foundation Trust, Princess Alexandra Hospital, and East of England NHS Procurement Hub to reduce waste by standardising the use of medical products.

A pilot began in July, which resulted in the ambulance service using dual use electrodes for electrocardiograms that do not need to be changed when a patient arrives at an Emergency Department and can be used on a patient for up to 72 hours. The move could potentially save the NHS £1.2m if adopted nationwide.

According to NHS Supply Chain data, the health service buys more than 270 million electrodes every year.

The partnership is looking to take a similar approach with the procurement of wound care products, IV devices, linen, and splints.

Sandy Brown, Director of Nursing and Clinical Quality at EEAST, said the project was being extended nationally following its success.
“It is focused on creating efficiency, whilst improving quality of patient care across organisations with shared benefits,” he said.

“This is the first project of its kind and as with many other successful initiatives it is simple in concept. The project includes identifying products that can be used across both the ambulance and acute sectors with the purpose to reduce waste and usage within all signed up organisations.

"It will also focus on improving the quality of care for patients across the organisational boundaries, reduction in staff time, waste and in the future, hopefully reducing the impact on the environment.”

David Monk, Emergency Department Operational Manager at CUH, said: “This joint initiative has created benefits for all organisations involved but most importantly for patients, who no longer need to experience the discomfort of the changing of electrodes when they arrive at hospital, staff time has been saved in ED and we have become more effective at our initial assessment of patients as a result.”

Ian Hooper, director of procurement and supply chain at CUH, said: “This project is a positive example of the clinical and financial benefits that can be achieved through collaboration.

“The outcome of this pilot is a big achievement for all those involved and should provide the foundation for us to progress standardisation of other categories between our organisations, whilst offering a case study upon which the initiative can be rolled out nationally.”