



# IMPROVING RENAL HEALTHCARE THROUGH TECHNOLOGY



Healthcare Scheduling Experts

## Introduction

For NHS Trusts, having efficiency across all departments and services is integral to the success of any hospital or medical facility. Whilst the priority for medical departments is to provide exemplary standards of patient care, other elements of the services they provide need to be examined to ensure they have the ability to accommodate increased service demands at a moment's notice.

With budgets continuing to be scrutinised, the demands on medical staff are increasing all the time and efforts should now be taken to automate processes whenever possible – particularly administrative processes that can take up valuable staff time and reduce clinical time with patients.

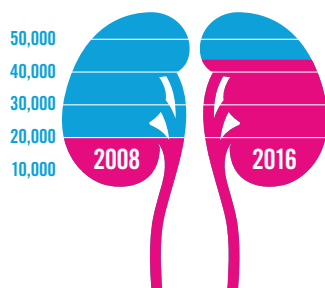
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Renal units, in particular, can often come under high levels of strain, largely due to the amount of patients they need to accommodate. Many patients will attend the same unit for appointments three times a week over a period of years, so it is essential that appointments can be booked easily and effectively.

The aim of this report is to provide an insight into the varying sizes of renal units across a number of NHS Trusts, to present a cross examination of services throughout the country; looking specifically at how units process their dialysis appointment scheduling. We spoke to more than 40 renal units and found that a stark variation in practises remain between different units when it comes to appointment scheduling.

Being able to schedule dialysis appointments quickly and effectively is critical to both patients and staff, and this survey identifies the need for a transparent, real-time approach across the service.

## How many people in the UK are currently receiving dialysis?



In 2008 around 20,000 patients were receiving dialysis in the UK and at that time it was predicted that the number would rocket to 40,000 by 2018 (source: National Kidney Federation). In fact, today there are currently around 43,000 people receiving treatment for kidney failure in England and approximately 5,500 people start treatment every year (source: NHS England). The take-on rate for patients onto Renal Replacement Therapy has risen progressively to about 110 per million population per annum (source: Renal Association, [www.renal.org](http://www.renal.org)). Increasing rates of obesity and an ageing UK population as well as a significant shortage of donor organs for transplant are all contributing factors. The facts are that the number of dialysis places needed will continue to rise.

Patients are utilising facilities at renal units ranging from the central hub based at main hospitals, though to the associated satellite units based out in the community. The accessibility to dialysis units for patients varies regionally, depending on population size and the number of satellite units available.

For the NHS Trusts questioned in this survey, the number of satellite units a central hub had, ranged from 1 up to 12, presenting an array of challenges when it comes to managing patients and their treatment plans. Our survey showed that the majority of units were seeing over 100 patients per week. [The findings from the units we questioned also revealed that 15 per cent of dialysis appointments took more than an hour to be scheduled](#) – with the availability of slots varying drastically across the units. Time taken carrying out these administrative duties is unfortunately impacting on clinical time.



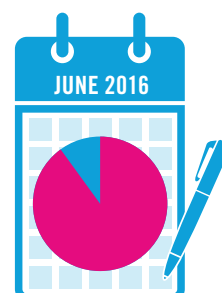
Renal units should be able to effectively handle patient appointment queries such as cancellations, holidays and rescheduling requests as quickly as possible in order to avoid any delays to its patients. By implementing a transparent, real-time, automated system across units, processing times will be reduced.

## Why are some units not using electronic booking systems?

In recent years, the use of traditional paper-based systems has diminished significantly across the majority of industries. Technology is now able to hold data safely and securely, reducing the risk of lost information or potential human error.

Online software allows appointments and resource availability to be transparent for all members of staff, meaning scheduling across the units is efficient with errors being minimised – such as double booking of dialysis stations and cancellation/re-utilisation of slots.

[Almost 90% of the NHS Trusts questioned in this survey were using either a paper diary or a spreadsheet to schedule their patients.](#) The research shows that there is a shortage of flexible, affordable scheduling systems available in this area.



[Nearly a third \(31%\) of the units spoken to were not able to run any kind of management reports.](#) With the trends showing that the number of dialysis patients will continue to increase, the importance of identifying and adopting an efficient scheduling system is critical to the service.



Staff across the public healthcare sector are becoming increasingly stretched in terms of their roles and responsibilities; technology can help alleviate this.

## The existence of waiting lists in NHS renal units

Of the units questioned, 70% reported that they had a waiting list for dialysis space at their unit. Trying to find real-time, available space across the central hub and satellite units can be complex and time consuming. The process for identifying and booking patient appointments needs to be as easy and instantaneous as possible.

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The demand for dialysis appointments is continuing to increase in the UK so it's essential that NHS Trust decision-makers take steps to streamline how their dialysis service is managed. This is particularly important for units that are already at, or approaching full patient capacity.

## Evaluation and Conclusion

With the UK population and average age forecast both set to increase in the coming years along with increasing rates of obesity and a shortage of donor organs, demands on renal units will continue to increase. Consequently, units need to be as fully prepared as possible to handle these demands.

**Denise Williamson**, Managing Director at BookWise Solutions Limited:

Whilst some units have utilised technology to automate processes to lower waiting times and reduce the demands on staff, it's evident that many Trusts are still using traditional means of working, such as paper-based booking systems. In this digital age, technology should be embraced that enables more efficient use of staff and resources.

BookWise Renal is designed specifically for scheduling dialysis patients. As with all our software the aim has been to create a transparent, real-time scheduling system that is easy to use and enables maximum efficiency of resource utilisation.

With budgets stretched and the demands on staff ever-increasing, NHS Trusts should be preparing for the future and implementing efficient and time saving processes wherever possible.

For more information about BookWise Renal visit:

**[www.bookwisesolutions.com/product/renal](http://www.bookwisesolutions.com/product/renal)**

Or call: **0800 052 0004**