

Add a diabetes check to your shopping list - quick tests now available in the community

Incidence rates of diabetes are rising rapidly – in the UK one person is diagnosed every three minutes. There are circa 2.5 million diabetics in this country, and it's estimated that another half a million don't even know they're diabetic. That is the problem facing healthcare providers: how do they manage the increasing requirement to test for new cases, while continuing to monitor existing cases, and do it all as cost effectively and time efficiently as possible? Individuals with diabetes are required to attend a review at least twice a year to assess the results of various tests and to see how new treatment schedules have affected their condition.

This may sound very simple and straightforward but each review cycle may involve several appointments for blood samples, nurse clinics and discussions with a GP or specialist. What about patients with work or family commitments, or those who simply can't take time off during the day?

One Midlands PCT has tackled this issue in an innovative way – a member of the diabetes team describes how: "Our team decided to act on the vision of bringing good quality, patient focused diabetes care into the community, by running an evening diabetes clinic in a local supermarket. We purchased an Afinion™ analyser, which we leave at the clinic, so that we could provide patients with their HbA1c results all in one consultation. It allows us to give results to our patients during the consultation and agree a management approach with them."

HbA1c is the key test for monitoring whether an individual's diabetes is under control. Healthcare workers know that 1 in 10 deaths among 20 – 79 year olds in England in 2005 were attributed to diabetes related causes – so there is a clear and urgent need for regular testing. The Afinion™ analyser used within this scheme is a small desktop instrument that enables a pin prick of blood to be tested for HbA1c in less than 5 minutes. This enables the specialist nurses, who run the clinic, to reassure patients that all is well there and then, or refer them on for more intensive discussion and treatments. The service had a virtually instant impact; "We found patients who hadn't had an HbA1c test in five years – or even since their diagnosis" commented one of the team.

The Afinion™ analyser from Axis-Shield UK meets PCT's practical requirements. For example, it enables *on-the-spot* testing for a range of different parameters. And it is so easy to use that many PCTs are taking it out into the community to provide out of hours diabetes checks at public venues. This is particularly important for people who, quite literally, cannot afford to take time off work. Now everyone receives equal access to essential healthcare services.



Afinion™ is also being widely used within the new Free Health Check program. Its ease of use is key, as discussed by the Midlands team, “We reviewed several different types of machines and picked the one which, in our opinion, was the easiest to use and had the best follow up support”. Afinion™ helps clinicians to quickly assess patients whose lifestyles or medical history point to potential diabetes onset. Quicker identification of this risk helps patients to take the most appropriate steps to address their future health. Better for themselves and for the wider community.

Sue Younghusband, Marketing Director at Axis-Shield UK, said: “The growing number of diabetes clinics available within the community can help with the treatment and early detection of associated health complications. The Afinion™ analyser requires only a single drop of blood or urine and can provide accurate test results in a matter of minutes. Results can then be discussed with the patient there and then, meaning any changes in the management of their condition can be implemented without delay and potential complications caught early. This can go a long way to help reduce avoidable hospital admissions and give patients peace of mind.”

Thanks to the Afinion™ analyser patient-focused diabetes care is more accessible than ever. The Afinion™ analyser is the ideal tool to extend the reach and quality of testing for new and existing diabetes patients in the community.

