VistA can rescue NHS Trusts from “serious repercussions”!
Join tech revolution or face 'serious repercussions', hospitals told

31 January, 2013 | By James Illman

Hospitals face “very serious repercussions” if they do not have electronic patient records systems in place by 2014-15, an NHS Commissioning Board chief warned last night.
Survey of EPR functions in 118 UK Hospitals

Using Jha (NEJMed 2009) instrument (max computerisation index = 32)

Only 7 (6%) of Trusts had an EPR

See: Khurana et al BMJ Q&S 2013 - in press

Computerisation index

Low

Medium

High
VA and the VistA EPR system

• Comprehensive open source electronic patient record developed by US Veterans’ Administration
• VA = largest medical system in the United States:
  – provides care to over 8 million veterans & families
  – employs 180,000 medical personnel
  – operates 163 hospitals, 800 clinics, 135 nursing homes
  – one single electronic healthcare information network, VistA
• Evolved over 20 years from DHCP programme
• Strong clinical involvement in development, bug reporting, improvement
• Covers hospital / primary care / community care / mental health
Central Archive, ePR with Image Integration, and Workflow Steps
Why VistA?

• VA – quite close structure and functions to NHS, inc. community & primary care
• Functionality: clinical, managerial, research...
• Free software – but need £ to localise / configure it
• Jordan has successfully implemented it country-wide
• Addresses many of John’s risks of health IT
Why Open Source?

• Open = extensible / flexible
• Open = safer [more eyes; computer-supported safety checking from source code]
• Open = fun for IT people
• Traffic lights, Shuttle, web servers, etc. use open source
• 60% of IBM’s revenues now come from services supporting open source – APACHE etc.
• Mac OS Lion etc. are built on Linux kernel
Moving forwards

• Buy in expertise from VA/ Jordan / World VistA to get started
• Regional or national resource centres funded by Trust consortia
• One possible model of delivery is application serving from Cloud
• Local customisation / augmentation of functions – then share worldwide
• Fits with NHS Hack Days, Code 4 Health initiative [Kelsey]
• Geraint Lewis – now NHS chief data officer – organised workshop on VistA at Nuffield Trust 2012.
• Urgent need for coordination and timing – ask Nuffield Trust or NHS Confederation to lead?