**Does the NHS produce any Products?**

When I'm talking to people about the NHS I'm often told that the NHS activity can't be compared with manufacturing activity because the NHS does not have any products. I'm starting to question if this is true. Have a look at the Wikipedia definition for *'Product (business), an item that serves as a solution to a specific consumer problem'1*. Using this definition I'd like to suggest that the NHS does, in fact, provide internal and external consumers (clinicians and patients) with a number of products. These products take the form of a written report, rather like a Surveyor's report when you purchase a house.

I have compiled a list of six *Products* to initiate some discussion on this subject. Here they are:

1. Assessment2
2. Diagnosis3
3. Treatment Plan4
4. Aftercare Plan5
5. Discharge6
6. Personal Health and Care Records7 (a compilation of 1 to 5 above)

This is not presented as a definitive list of products produced by the NHS.

All these *Products* are in the format of a report and are usually created and stored electronically and can be communicated electronically.

It is imperative that the relevant records are available, at the right time and place, along the patient's pathway and should be regarded as *Products* for internal Consumers. An effective form of access and communication systems are required for this to be achieved. These are just two of the enabling sub-systems that are required, the key enabling system, of course, is the data input, storage and retrieval system.

Are these very important *Products* given the emphasis/priority that they require in the NHS? Are the processes that lead to the compilation of these *Products* given the emphasis/priority that they require for their accurate compilation in the NHS?

Assuming that all these *Products* have a standardized format7, and I do hope that this is the case, are quality checks made throughout the compilation process to ensure that they are accurate and complete? This activity must be included in the organization's Process Management activity in order to achieve the required quality standard.

Are the enabling systems adequately designed and used to facilitate all the requirements for the accurate delivery of these *Products*, not only for internal Consumers but increasingly more so for external Consumers - the Patients?

A third category of Consumers for these *Products* is the medical Researcher. The value of these *Products* to this equally important category of Consumers is questionable due to the accuracy (poor quality) of the data8.

These *Products* (records) provide an audit trail of the patient’s journey along the patient pathway and are the key source of evidence for investigation.

These are important questions and will be best addressed if the activities and methodologies associated with *Product* Design are followed. BAU (business as usual) is not the way forward.

What effect does the specification of these *Products* have on Service Design?

**References**

1 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Product_(business)>

2 <https://www.england.nhs.uk/2017/12/new-approach-to-nhs-clinical-assessment-could-save-thousands-of-lives/>

3 <https://www.england.nhs.uk/patientsafety/wp-content/uploads/sites/32/2016/03/discharge-standards-march-16.pdf>

4 <https://assets.nhs.uk/prod/documents/MH-CoP-Your-treament-and-Plan.pdf>

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/social-care-and-support-guide/help-from-social-services-and-charities/care-and-support-plans/>

5 <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/social-care-and-support-guide/care-after-a-hospital-stay/care-after-illness-or-hospital-discharge-reablement/>

6 <https://digital.nhs.uk/services/transfer-of-care-initiative/edischarge-summaries>

7 <https://theprsb.org/standards/healthandcarerecords/>

8 <https://bmjopen.bmj.com/content/8/8/e018576>

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