

ONCALLbuddy Case Study

Chartered Society of Physiotherapy Digital Tools Case Study

Quick intro to yourself and any contact details you're happy to share ...

ONCALLbuddy (www.oncallbuddy.co.uk) was developed by Stephanie Mansell and Iain Loughran. Both are NHS physiotherapists NHS England Clinical Entrepreneurs.

Stephanie is a consultant respiratory physiotherapist at the Royal Free Hospital NHS Foundation Trust with expertise in tertiary, secondary and long term care of respiratory patients. Clinically, she is co-lead of the sleep and ventilation services at the Royal Free Hospital, dealing with patients with both acute and long term respiratory failure. She is also working on an innovation project called 3DPiPPIn (www.clinicaltrials.gov), which uses 3D printing to customise CPAP face masks. She has a passion for technology and how it can best be mobilised to enhance patient care. You can find Stephanie on Twitter @skmansell and email her at stephanie.mansell1@nhs.net.

Iain is an extended scope physiotherapist in the musculoskeletal service at North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust. Clinically, he works in a musculoskeletal service as an extended scope physiotherapist. He is also working on an innovation project exploring the use of AI based decision making tools in musculoskeletal services (www.MSKpredict.com). He has an interest in the use of AI and clinical decision making tools to improve patient care. You can find Iain on Twitter @iainloughran and email him at iain.loughran@nhs.net.

What tools have you developed to deliver your physio services digitally?

Stephanie and Iain have developed a free educational app for physiotherapists. ONCALLbuddy (www.oncallbuddy.co.uk) is a web based app for healthcare professionals and is available on any platform. The content includes common respiratory conditions, assessment treatment techniques and COVID-19 specific resources. ONCALLbuddy was developed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic which has seen a large proportion of the workforce deployed into respiratory and critical care settings. We recognised this would seem daunting for many physiotherapists and wanted to provide an educational resource that would meet the demands of both the workforce and workplace. Being able to quickly and easily access information on the go made an app the perfect solution.

How have these services replaced face to face contact?

The COVID-19 pandemic created challenges for both service delivery and educational needs on a massive scale and in a short timescale. Most services provided training for staff returning to respiratory and critical areas. While training typically delivered in face to face settings, the pandemic restrictions have limited normal training delivery options. In addition to web based lectures, online learning platforms (such as e-LFH by HEE), and access to social media platforms, ONCALLbuddy allows staff to carry a quick reference guide in their pockets. This provides a supplement to existing educational methods, and provides 'real time' support for healthcare professionals on the frontline.

How did you develop ONCALLbuddy?

Stephanie and Iain conceived, developed, and launched ONCALLbuddy over a 10 day period. The educational content was developed by Stephanie, focusing on information that would be useful in oncall, respiratory, and critical settings. Iain developed the app using web based software (www.glideapps.com), which is freely available. During the development, the app was promoted on social media and a landing page with email capture was set up. The app was launched to the email list and across social media after a small alpha test with colleagues.

Do you have any user feedback for ONCALLbuddy?

Since the initial launch, ONCALLbuddy has had significantly positive feedback across social media and through direct email. This has helped grow the app to over 8,000 users from 42 countries within the first month. The feedback indicates that the quantity and quality of the content is relevant to the users. Suggestions have included several areas of content that users would like to see, which we are currently working on.

Any top tips to others exploring using digital tools in physio services?

Timing is key! The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted and created a massive demand for easy to access educational content. This has undoubtedly enhanced the speed of uptake of ONCALLbuddy.

Be brave! ONCALLbuddy was launched as a minimally viable product (MVP). Feedback indicated that the content and functionality of the app were enough to make users happy. Waiting until you have the 'perfect' product will mean you never release anything.

Network! Make use of your networks - social, professional, personal. We publicly announced the app before we were ready to launch. This allowed us to collect an email list, and assess the demand for the app. Being able to launch the app to the audience we had, even though relatively small, no doubt contributed to the early speed of downloads.

Last but not least

Stephanie and Iain would like to say a huge thanks to Euan McComiskie at the CSP and Marie-Clare Wadley at HEE for their advice, guidance, and support. We would also like to extend our thanks to HEE, who have provided generous funding to ensure that the app can be developed, maintained, and remain free for the first 12 months.