

Clinical informatics

Join the team and
make a difference

Clinical informatics staff are usually doctors, nurses or other healthcare professionals who have moved to health informatics. Their job is to capture, communicate and use patient information to improve patient care.

What will you do?

Clinical professionals

People in this role usually develop a keen interest in using information to improve services while still in clinical practice. Your particular value is bringing hands-on clinical knowledge and experience to bear on an informatics role.

You could have a variety of roles as a clinical professional. The common thread is combining your clinical expertise with an understanding of how information about patients and services can be used to bring about improvements. Within that, there is huge scope to develop projects. You could carry out audit or research full or part time, manage information services for your specialism or help to develop computer systems that support clinicians.

You may support healthcare professionals collect information they are obliged to provide, for example by managing clinical audit projects clinicians are able to develop standards and collect useful information about their practice. You would closely involve everyone – clinicians and management – who can help bring about positive change to services as a result of audit.



You may decide to collect information for a national project. Once again, you can use your contacts with clinicians and your understanding of practice to make sure the information you collect is meaningful and relevant.

Through the National Programme for IT, there are also plenty of opportunities to lead and develop new computer systems. Working in this field, you will use your knowledge as a clinician to ensure that new IT systems work to support clinicians and to deliver a better service to patients.

PACS system manager

By replacing film, which has been the main medium for capturing, storing, and displaying radiographic images for 100 years, the digital Picture Archiving and Communications System (PACS) is contributing to a more efficient and advanced health care service.

You run the PACS service, which stores and transfers still and moving images, such as X-rays, ultrasound and MRI scans, electronically. The system means healthcare professionals can access and view images on screen at the touch of a button. You are also responsible for the operation of the Radiology Information System (RIS), which is connected to PACS; ensuring results of exams are properly recorded and presented back to the person who requested them.

You are responsible for ensuring the quality of the images on the system, for example that they are captured in the right format. You will also make sure images match up correctly with patient information on the radiology information system so that the results of scans and X-rays can be shared with other clinicians anywhere in the hospital, or in another trust. An important part of the job is checking that patient information is accurate and complete.

There is a strong technical side to the role, for example setting up passwords and log-ins for PACS users, or responding to requests for help from any department using PACS. You will routinely deal with software upgrades or changes, transfer images to CDs and organise the trust's archive of PACS images.

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You are responsible for making sure the trust has the PACS provision it needs. This can include assessing different departments' needs for PACS workstations, and helping them to bid for these. You will also be in charge of making sure healthcare professionals are trained to use the system.

Administrative assistant

Administrative assistants provide essential back up and support throughout the NHS.

Your role is to provide office and other support to those working in health informatics services in a trust. In the informatics setting this could be, for example, supporting information networks and the staff who use them. You could be expected to help organise events, use and update websites and deal with contacts and correspondence including email, telephone calls and letters.

Your general duties are likely to include coordinating meetings and taking notes, word processing, setting up and maintaining filing systems, inputting and retrieving information from databases, providing secretarial support and working as part of a team to ensure the smooth running of a department.

Role	Where will you work?	What skills and qualities will you need?
Clinical professionals	You are likely to go out to all parts of the hospital to meet clinicians and managers for your projects. You might also develop informatics projects part time from your clinical department or work on a national IT project.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an interest in information and how it can be used to improve ways of working • a problem-solving, innovative approach • an understanding of how to collect and use data about patients and services • a thorough understanding of health services and clinical practice
PACS system manager	You will be based in the medical imaging/radiology department. You will go out to see people using PACS in all parts of the hospital, such as wards, clinics and the emergency department.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ability to work to highest standards of accuracy • organised, efficient approach • good communication skills • confidence with computers and digital technology • the ability to match technology to clinical needs
Administrative assistant in clinical informatics	You will work as part of the health informatics service in a trust, or for a shared health informatics service.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • good levels of literacy • confidence with computers • a good telephone manner and able to communicate with people at all levels • ability to work in a busy environment • an organised, efficient approach

What entry routes are available?

Clinical professionals can either develop informatics projects part time, while remaining in your job as a clinician, or you can leave clinical practice to take up an informatics role full time. Opportunities to carry out informatics work vary from trust to trust, and often depend on the interest and abilities of the individual clinician.

A typical route may be from clinical practice into research or audit. Many clinical professionals who specialise in IT begin by developing their own small-scale electronic systems to solve local problems.

Many people will combine their clinical and informatics qualifications. Universities now have part-time masters courses, and offer diplomas in health informatics as well as degree courses. There are also undergraduate courses in health information.

PACS system managers usually have a background as a radiographer. The job combines management skills with a thorough knowledge of a medical imaging/radiology department and the hospital departments and staff it serves.

Courses in radiography usually take three years. Ideally, you should have an interest in science and people (subjects studied include anatomy, physiology and pathology, image interpretation, as well as aspects of patient care) and maths skills are also helpful.

There are positions for **administration assistants** to support health informatics teams throughout the NHS. You will usually need GCSE English or equivalent, and being comfortable with popular computer software will help, although you can often develop your computer skills in the job.

Employers above all are looking for someone who is well-organised, enthusiastic and who works well as a part of a team.

For more information on the range of opportunities available in health informatics, please visit www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/list/qualifications. This gives more specific details about what qualifications are necessary for each role. You can search for current vacancies and download job descriptions at www.jobs.nhs.uk

How can you develop your career?

The NHS is part way through an ambitious IT programme, the aim of which is to introduce electronic medical records, booking and prescribing systems that support good care for patients. This huge change, as well as the introduction of targets, and choice for patients, has all created a wealth of opportunities for clinical professionals to develop a wide range of informatics projects.

The input of clinical professionals who combine a detailed understanding of how information supports healthcare and a thorough knowledge of clinical practice is now more important than ever.

There are promotion opportunities for PACS system managers within radiology departments, allowing you to develop skills in leading edge technology as well as general management skills, which could be transferred to the management of other systems within health informatics.

Administration assistants have a wealth of opportunities to progress within health informatics. For example, you could study part time for a degree and join the libraries and knowledge management team as a

library officer. Alternatively, with study and experience you could move into patient services administration management.

For more information about training in clinical informatics and courses you can take to progress your career, please visit www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/list/training

As well as moving to more senior and specialised roles within this area, you will also have the opportunity to take on additional responsibilities and progress within the organisation, as part of the Career Framework. For more information about this initiative please see the *Careers in health informatics* booklet.

Pay

The national pay system in the NHS is called Agenda for Change (AfC). This applies to all staff in health informatics except the most senior managers. These are examples of roles and the AfC bands at which they may be paid: clinical audit lead (Band 4-5); clinical audit facilitator (Band 5); clinical audit facilitator specialist (Band 6); clinical governance practitioner – higher level (Band 8 a-c). For more information, visit www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/list/payandbenefits

To find out more about careers in the health informatics team, please visit
www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/list/working

For all contact details, visit
www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/list/contacts