
Feature Article

Comparing Cloud Based Customer Relationship & Patient Record Management Software for Aesthetic Businesses

The latest buzz is about cloud computing...have you heard of it? Do you know what it's all about? Here's a clue: it has nothing to do with the weather!

Increasingly the concept of storing and managing data, from photos and videos through to spreadsheets and databases is being enabled through hosted servers which are then accessible through an Internet browser or a dedicated application on smartphones and tablets. This means that the data is securely stored on a bank of third party servers or 'cloud' which can be accessed from multiple devices simultaneously, freeing up your own or your company's requirements for hard drive space and allowing on-the-go access to your data.



In the case of larger database requirements it means that instead of investing in a bank of in-house servers which will both depreciate in value and become 'old tech' over time, an organisation can now pay-as-you-go for a shared, always up-to-date, guaranteed capacity, hosted server service, thus incurring an operating cost to their business without worrying about capital expenditure and future upgrade requirements.

Cloud computing also removes the need to be responsible for backing up systems and on or off-premises safe keeping of back-ups against fire risks etc. as everything is saved securely in the cloud, often with hardware redundancy planning and disaster recovery systems built into the service provision. (Although, in my opinion you would be well advised to keep regular back-ups of your cloud based data. It's always better to be safe than sorry!)

One of the biggest advantages of cloud computing is of course the ability to access your data over the Internet which means that it can be accessed anytime, anyplace where a WiFi or 3G/4G connection is available for data download to a laptop, Mac, mobile phone or tablet based device. This makes it an ideal solution for those professionals who are always on the go from place to place but need access to their personal and business data. It is also more secure than carting around a USB flash stick full of business data which could be all too easily lost.

Examples of commonly used (and mostly free) cloud based storage and document management systems, also referred to as file hosting services include Google Drive (which integrates the old Google Docs), SkyDrive from Microsoft, iCloud from Apple and Dropbox. These allow the easy storage and access to spreadsheets, word processing files, PDFs, images, audio and video files, and any number of other formats.

Moving on from a simple hard drive in the sky, we then find hosted services or Application Servicing Provisioning (ASP) which run certain software in a remote location which you can access through a web browser or mobile app. Examples would include everything from online banking apps, social media apps, games, music providers like Spotify and communication systems like Skype. Acronyms you may hear about ASP services include SaaS (Software as a Service), PaaS (Platform as a Service), IaaS (Infrastructure as a Service), HaaS (Hardware as a Service) and finally EaaS (Everything as a Service).

Essentially these all tap into our more advanced adoption of mobile technology as seen in the last 3 or 4 years with the development of so called smartphones which now cross a mobile phone with a PDA (Personal Digital Assistant) and a digital camera – truly the filo-fax the yuppies wished they'd had in the 1980s!

Smartphones, and latterly tablets have become widespread amongst us as the new mini-computer and work using various operating systems. The key players (and most supported for apps) being iOS (from Apple) and Android (from Google), with Windows and the Blackberry OS also available.

So, most of us now use a smartphone or tablet to read and send emails, check our social media profiles, read web based content and a multitude of other things which we used to do on a desktop pc or laptop; so why not manage our businesses and clients with them too?

Cloud Based CRM, CMS & Patient Record Keeping Software

As well as simple file hosting services, more and more companies are turning to ASPs for their Customer Relationship Management (CRM) software requirements. According to Gartner, the world's leading IT research and advisory company, 40% of all CRM software sold worldwide in 2012 was SaaS based. That's a huge amount of data now being managed by third party cloud storage service providers.

CRM or Client Management Systems (CMS) have been around for a number of years now; basically they are like an address book of your clients, linked with a diary or appointment calendar and space for historical and future notes about your relationship with them. Of course, they can be much more complex and sophisticated than that depending on your business. Now in the past this would have been a paper driven system, which makes searching and auditing the data something of a thank-less task or as technology progressed it would've evolved into a computer database based piece of software, perhaps running through Microsoft Access or similar, which may or may not have been child's play to use and audit!

The current raft of CRM and patient information management software on the market, which often can be used on either computers/macs, mobile technologies such as iPads or smartphones or in some cases both are more than just a database of patient records.

Some position themselves as an interactive tool which both the clinician and the patient can use as they 'journey' through the treatment programme and extend their mutual relationship into the future. The aim being that it becomes a tool throughout the consultation process which both parties can engage with – a true manager of relationships.

Features such as integrated before and after photo capture through the camera on mobile devices, speech to text add-ons for ease of compiling patient notes and integration with calendars, billing and email systems, make modern CRM and patient record management solutions an attractive option for aesthetic practitioners and their clinical staff.

The NHS has even got in on the act. Two years ago a pilot scheme started at the Chelsea and Westminster hospital where they were to trial storing patient data in an online cloud storage system called the E-Health Cloud, developed by a Scottish company called Flexiant. The scheme, set to run for 2 years should be coming to an end soon, so one wonders if it will be deemed a success by the powers that be at the public health organisation and whether we will see more cloud based patient information systems rolled out into the NHS environment.

Key Elements Within Patient Record Management Systems

At the end of the day, it's all about improving your clinic admin processes and streamlining them where you can. A good, modern CRM or patient record system will help you to do that by reducing or removing time consuming paperwork such as recording patient notes and uploading photos to their records. The ultimate aim of course is that the less time a practitioner spends on admin for their client base, the more time they will have to deliver a better service to their existing clients as well as increasing their capacity to take on new clients, thus improving turnover.

One of the key 'bits of paper' required by any aesthetic practitioner involved in delivering cosmetic treatment solutions to the public is informed consent. Despite most professionals thinking that surely this is a non-brainer, the recently published Keogh review into the regulation of cosmetic interventions in England felt that due to poor consent processes it was important to recommend that for non-surgical procedures a record of consent must be held by the provider (recommendation 28).

Similarly, Eddie Hooker, Managing Director of insurer Hamilton Fraser told the audience at the recent BODY Conference that; "without evidence of consent you have no defence in any claim made against you". So, any software that you invest in ought to have a means by which you can record informed consent from all the patients that you see. The simpler this process is, of course the better.

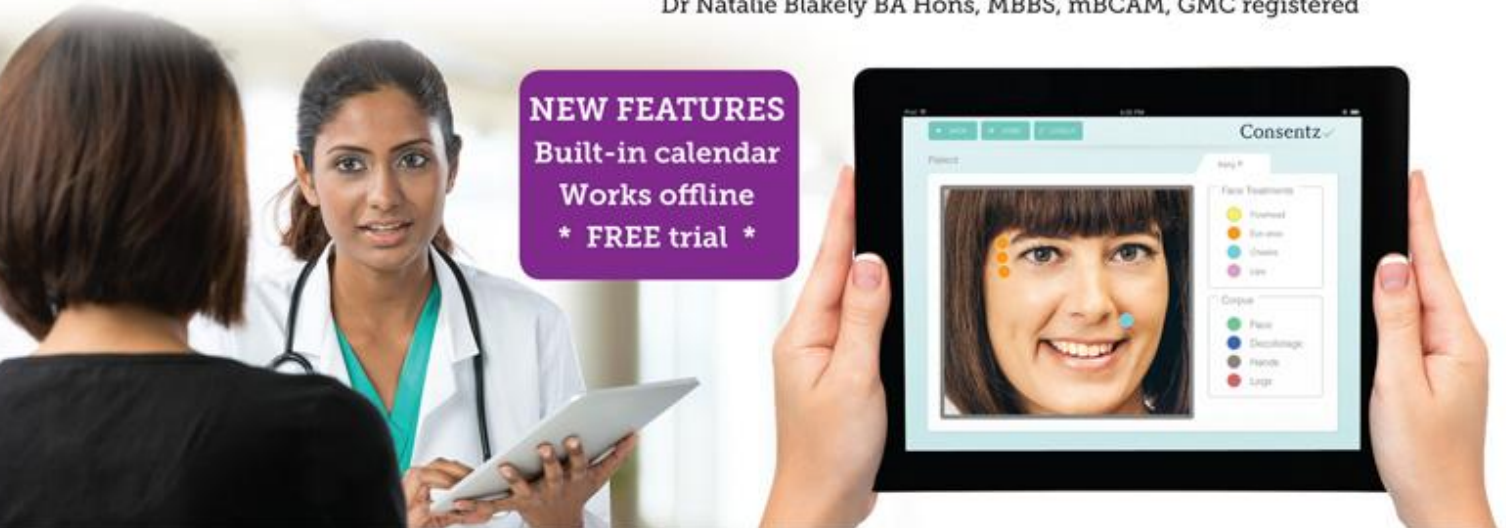
Another key issue to come up with Keogh was product tracking, based of course on the data and auditing issues which came to light with the PIP breast implant scandal. Thus, any software which allows a practitioner to detail the exact products, devices and amounts used, treatment parameters, batch numbers etc. when treating a patient will be a god send should any problems arise with drugs or device recalls in the future.

Another, perhaps easily over looked element to bear in mind, as well as the security of the hosted data is the compliance with the Data Protection Act for the patient information being held.

Consentz ✓

"Consentz has streamlined my working life, saving me time and money while increasing the turnover of my business."

Dr Natalie Blakely BA Hons, MBBS, mBCAM, GMC registered



The elegant patient record system for your iPad that makes paperwork a thing of the past!

Intuitive, easy to set up and use, simply download from itunes*

Consentz enables practitioners to obtain proper, informed patient consent that meets the new recommendations set down by the Review of the Regulation of Cosmetic Interventions.



No more after-hours transcribing

A unique speech-to-text recognition function transcribes your patient notes into text as you speak and stores them securely.



Visible record of treatment

Before/after patient photographs, taken with your iPad or camera can be added to your patient's file in seconds. Plus, a colour-coded note function records the exact location of treatments.



Electronic consent forms and digital signatures

Patients can complete questionnaires and consent forms on the iPad with a simple, one-touch button and provide a digital signature using a tablet pen.



Appointments diary

Simple set up with a choice of integrated calendar or connect to Google Calendar, Salesforce or your CRM.



Track and trace

Quickly find who has been treated with a specific batch of product. (Search by lot number).



Security

We take security very seriously. Consentz is hosted on trusted servers over SSL and with industry standard security.

Consentz ✓

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www.consentz.com

*search Consentz in the itunes store for your 15 day free trial

The European Union's Data Protection Directive prohibits the storing of data outside of the European Union, however the UK's Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) doesn't set that down wholly into law. For example, the USA's Safe Harbor programme meets the [ICO's security requirements](#) so it's perfectly safe and Data Protection Act compliant to use U.S. based servers. However, most systems on the market stick with using UK based storage solutions due to some concerns over access permissions by American authorities.

Another tricky point in terms of data protection compliance comes with sharing patient information. Simple concepts such as emailing medical records directly to a patient can be seen as risky. Should a patient's email system get hacked in some way and the record get distributed, it's likely that the ICO may choose to fine the originator. Some therefore argue that it is better to have systems which also allow a patient to be given a login to access their records through a secure portal.

For help and guidance the ICO has published [Guidance on the Use of Cloud Computing](#) for UK businesses.

What's on The Market for Aesthetic Industry Professionals?

The following will give you a snap-shot of some of the key solutions which are actively being marketed to aesthetic industry professionals (and other specialities). This is not an exhaustive list and you will find solutions out there which groups, such as plastic surgeons, have been using for some time. Some are full blown CRM systems, other are more focused on being patient consultation tools and treatment record keepers which may or may not integrate with other clinic systems. The solutions available offer options for sole practitioners through to multi-site large clinic chains, so there will be an option out there if you don't have something in place for your business currently. Please contact individual companies for more specific information on their service provisions.

Consentz

Consentz are proud to claim that their system was '*designed by medical practitioners for medical practitioners*' in conjunction with a software development company. Dr. Natalie Blakely, a Cosmetic Doctor and Medical Director of the Light Touch Clinic in Surrey created the concept of Consentz after being frustrated at the amount of time she was wasting on admin at her clinic, which often crept into time spent during lunchtimes, evenings and weekends playing catch-up transcribing patient treatment notes and loading up photos from her digital camera. Upon looking for an app based solution that she could use on her iPad and finding nothing which met her specific needs, she decided to create her own. Thus began the relationship with Ollie Maitland, a London based software developer.



"My primary objective with Consentz was to create an App that saved time, increased turnover and was quick and easy for the technically-challenged practitioner like me, to implement and use", said Dr. Blakely.

Consentz has never pitched itself as CRM software because it was designed to integrate with existing CRM software that clinics may already be using, as well as third party options like Google Calendar (part of Google App) and Salesforce; although it can be used as a stand-alone system. However, as time and developments have gone on the package now features an integrated calendar which is useful if you don't use a CRM, (and have been using this just for patient record management) as you can now input patient contact details directly into Consentz and create appointments from there. So slowly, Consentz is evolving into a CRM solution.

Consentz is available from the Apple [AppStore](#) to work on the i-Pad with five subscription options which range from £45 to £199 per month, plus VAT, depending on the number of log-ins or user licences required for the size of your business and the amount of storage space needed (which is upgradable). A 15 day free trial is also available.



Designed to be a simple and intuitive patient record system, it takes the user through a pathway for a patient consultation from registering a patient and booking them an appointment, to completing medical history questionnaires, discussing and detailing treatment plans, taking informed consent (including electronic signatures), recording treatment notes (including products used, placement and batch numbers) through speech-to-text where required and storing before and after photographs. Other key features of Consentz is its ability to work offline, so that those practitioners who are more mobile in their operations but can't access a

WiFi or 3G connection at a particular time can still record information in the app and then sync the data with the cloud when they get an Internet connection. The data is stored (via a secure API using SSL encryption) onto a dedicated server at a private cloud facility at RackSpace Enterprise in London which uses a redundant storage service to ensure backups of the data stored on Consentz. Customers also have the opportunity to store non-clinical information such as address details and photos on third party solutions such as Google Drive. Their UK team of 22 people provide email and telephone support during business hours. The company website also features video and PDF based tutorials.

Consentz is written in both HTML5 and native iOS, thereby maximising the benefits of both languages. Consentz uses native iOS code for some parts (e.g. nuance) and HTML5 for the overall app making it better across platform according to the makers. They see this as particularly important as the latest stats show Android sales have overtaken iPad sales. The Consentz development team are working on new features to improve the experience of the app. These are piloted with customers before being released out on the AppStore as a free upgrade to customers. An Android version is currently in beta testing and will be ready for release in the New Year. Offline support, optional Google integration, multiple practitioner and calendar support for larger clinics, custom consent forms and treatments and the ability to send prescriptions to pharmacies electronically is also in development.

"This isn't just an App that you buy and that is the end of it, we are constantly listening to our clients and evolving and moving forward"; said Dr. Blakely.

For more information, please visit www.consentz.com

e-clinic

e-clinic proudly pronounces that it is *'the best clinic management software on the market'*. It carries an impressive client list which includes some of the well established, multi-site clinic chains in our industry.

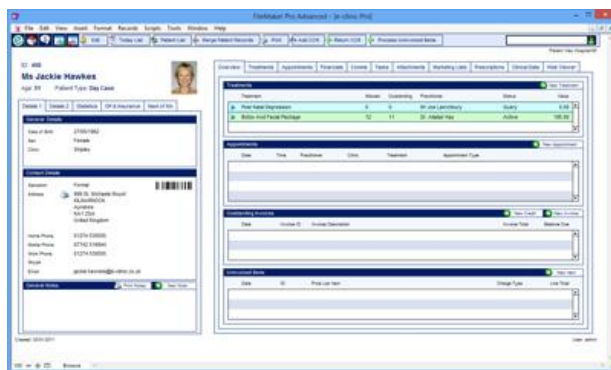


The CRM software is built around 5 core features – appointments, billing, clinical data, reporting and marketing. It therefore allows appointments to be booked across multiple diaries, invoices for treatments to be generated, the recording of treatment notes, product placement illustrations and photographs, a suite of reports and graphs for data analysis and marketing systems linked with MailChimp for targeted email campaigns, as well as patient text messages for appointment reminders and full blown call centre management systems for large clinic chains.

Although e-clinic is built on the foundation of a PC (or server) based software application which can be accessed from multiple terminals within a clinic building, such as the reception desk and clinical rooms, it is also available through a secure hosting solution which means that no in-house server is required and all software upgrades and back-ups are taken care of by them. This also allows the software to be used away from the clinic on mobile devices. The company's secure hosting means that data is held in cloud storage which can be accessed through an encrypted connection via PCs, laptops and Macs as well as iOS based systems such as iPads and iPhones. It uses an RDP (Remote Desktop Protocol) client for Android based devices.

e-clinic is available through a number of subscription options based on the size of one's business, thus there is a solution aimed at the single user up to unlimited users with multi clinic set-up (e-clinic pro). E-clinic is available from £99pcm for a cloud based solution or £2,000 for a locally installed option.

A new subscription offering will be available soon which will replace their previous e-clinic one and e-clinic plus options. This will be a browser/cloud based application based on the e-clinic One/Plus feature set but with a few new additions. More details will be available closer to launch.



Even the basic subscription provides a full CRM system of a patient database, unlimited diaries, invoicing, treatment and communication recording etc. Features on the premium product also allow the management of diaries for clinic rooms and equipment, integration with third party software like Google calendar, Outlook, Word, Skype etc., a raft of elevate accounting and book keeping features, credit card processing, stock control and supplier management, e- prescriptions and bespoke form creation for treatment recording.



e-clinic Pro is the **smart choice** for a **modern clinic**

If you're looking for a powerful, feature packed solution, e-clinic Pro is the right choice.

It's used by everyone from **individual practitioners** to large **healthcare chains**.

Install it on your own PC, Mac or server or choose **hosting in the cloud**, and access it while on the move from your **iPad or iPhone**.

It's flexible and powerful, with no limit to the number of users and easily configurable for **multiple locations**.

At its core is an intuitive clinic management package which allows fast **appointment booking**, flexible **billing**, recording of **clinical data**, complex **reporting** and great **marketing**.

Additional features like **online booking**, **website integration**, **outbound call management** and **bespoke forms** may also be of interest to larger clinics.



WANT A DEMO? Call on **01274 530505** or email us



Features at a glance

- ✓ Appointments for people, rooms, equipment
- ✓ Generate invoices and manage insurance
- ✓ Stock control with barcode support
- ✓ Create bespoke clinical forms
- ✓ Target patients for marketing campaigns
- ✓ Full reporting suite with charts
- ✓ Install on your PC or host in the cloud
- ✓ Use on the move on your iPad or iPhone
- ✓ Choose support and ongoing upgrades

Visit **e-clinic.co.uk** or email for more information

Mark Lainchbury from e-clinic said; “*Our product is more expensive than most of the competition for much the same reason that a particular brand of car or TV might be more expensive than another. It does more, it does it better, faster, more easily and more comfortably.*”

The e-clinic hosted solution uses two UK based data warehouses with data sync across both sites for added data security from loss. The data warehouses themselves come with level 4 security (24 hour staffed, 3 physical barriers to entry and CCTV).

The company provides a fully staffed support service which normally consists of four members of their technical team during business hours, with the option to take up extended support hours (24/7) with two people on call. They note that this service is expensive to run but does mean that clinics who work evenings and/or weekends can have the option of not having to wait until 9am on Monday if they need support outside of office hours. There is also a You Tube based [training channel](#).

For more information, please visit www.e-clinic.co.uk

iCLINICIAN

iCLINICIAN is the newest offering to the marketplace having been launched at the beginning of November 2013. The company website proudly announced in its launch statement that iCLINICIAN is ‘*packed with tons of features and designed from the ground up for the Aesthetics Industry*’.

Key features of iCLINICIAN include being able to manage patients by linking them to clinics, clinicians, treatments and appointments, manage clinics by creating an unlimited number of entries and easily seeing patients associated with them, manage appointments through an integrated calendar, communicate with patients through integrated email (including sending copies of their consent form and aftercare information) and record all communication history, store and record medical histories and treatment notes (including a speech-to-text option), save up to eight before and after pictures for each treatment, create and store informed consent forms with electronic signatures, create branded invoices and receipts as well as an in-house business management tools such as stock tracking and income analysis. Clinic management features include being able to record the daily temperature of fridges used for clinical supplies, and manage stock levels for products used in clinic.



Upon launch it was initially a patient and clinic management CRM system which was hosted on the user's computer or iPad, or on a central server hosted by the clinic. It was available through four subscription packages, with varying levels of features, (Satus, Polus, Medius and Grandis). The premium option (Grandis) offered the service of having the data hosted and managed by iCLINICIAN on their dedicated servers, thus providing a cloud storage option. This option also came with a range of additional features, such as offline use and sync (for an additional set-up fee), plus integration with third party calendars and the ability to send SMS text messages to patient which was not included in the non-hosted versions.

Those versions of their service where the data is hosted are backed up by the server on a daily basis and the server is also backed up to a back-up server on a weekly basis, all of the data storage is UK based.

All versions of iCLINICIAN are designed for use on an iPad or iPad Mini using the free Filemaker Go 12 app. (The database can be easily transferred to an iPad using iTunes). It can also be used on a Mac or PC using Filemaker Pro. The company provides video tutorials, a built in help module and telephone support during business hours.

The solutions, aimed to ‘support every business’ started with the free single user licence for iCLINICIAN Satus and iCLINICIAN Polus (£450), followed by the multi-user solutions of iCLINICIAN Medius (£650) and iCLINICIAN Grandis (£950 + a £150 annual hosting fee). A 14 day free trial of their iCLINICIAN Polus option is available.

However, since their launch and moving in to 2014, the company is making some changes to its iCLINICIAN packages, in order, it says 'to better serve our customers, the majority of whom are small one or two person businesses'.

This means that they have redesigned iCLINICIAN's offline functionality. In practical terms this will mean the amalgamation of the stand-alone iCLINICIAN Polus version and the premium iCLINICIAN Grandis into a single product solution which offers the best of both initial product offerings.

This new solution will mean that all users will have access to the full spectrum of iCLINICIAN Grandis' hosted capabilities including syncing with Google Calendar, iCal etc. and using the SMS Text Module to send individual & group text messages whilst still being able to work offline when they have limited or no internet connection.

Neil Manchester from iCLINICIAN said; "my aim is to bring the price down to £500 (plus £120 annual hosting fee), just above the current iCLINICIAN Polus cost but with the benefits of iCLINICIAN Grandis. This will include two user accounts with the option to add additional user accounts for a one off fee of £125 per user".

"I know how expensive it can be setting up a new business so I will also be offering a monthly purchase package to spread the cost over 12 months (£50 x 12 monthly payments). I strongly believe that those clinicians starting out in the aesthetics industry should have access to the same tools as the most established businesses whilst at the same time not hitting successful businesses with large ongoing fees"; said Neil.

iCLINICIAN will also be offering 'try before you buy' masterclasses, starting in January 2014. Interested practitioners will be able to go to their headquarters in Liverpool for a free half-day training session so they can try iCLINICIAN out for themselves before deciding if it is the system is right for their business model. Those who purchase the system will also have access to training sessions. Telephone and email support is provided during business hours, along with video tutorials on the company website.

For more information, please visit www.iclinician.co.uk

iConsultAesthetic

iConsultAesthetic is the brain child of Richard Crawford-Small who has been in the aesthetic industry for many years, most notably as a corporate account manager at Allergan before setting up RCS Consulting in 2012.

Richard said; "iConsultAesthetic is not just a data recording solution. It is not just a data management system. It is not just a consultation tool. It's all three and more." In fact he goes further to describe the patient management system as a 'clinical digital ecosystem'.

Available via the Apple AppStore for iOS based Apple systems such as iPads and iPhones, the application simply needs a WiFi or 3G connection to the Internet to work with all the data being backed up to cloud storage. Unlike some of its competitors which function via Filemaker software or HTML5 coding, iConsultAesthetic is proud to be one of the only iOS App based solution on the market. The app is not available on Android which Richard notes is because the demand is simply not there, with more people choosing iPads than Android powered tablets.

The iConsultAesthetic app is available through free ware (limited features) or pay as you go style bundles for low use customers via the iConsult Essentials and iConsult OnDemand packages or through monthly and annual subscriptions for unlimited use with the iConsult Professional.

Key features include bespoke digital patient consent process (including electronic signatures), bespoke treatment plans and aftercare documents, treatment mapping to easily log the product used and where on a face map, patient imaging for ease of capture of before and after photos, data management administration levels which allow the clinician and the client to log in online and view various records through a unique patient passport system so they can view their before and after photos, consent and medical history.

It claims to do more than just record data though and is aimed at increasing revenue for the clinic or practitioner by creating compelling experiences for clients, maximising cross-selling opportunities, increasing client retention and maximising revenue generation per client, as well as enhancing clinical efficiency.



The version now available is a complete new build from the original product launched in April 2013. Following feedback from early testers and their experiences, Richard took the brave move to redesign the iConsultAesthetic system from the ground up with a completely new code base; something which he believes makes his application more advanced than his competition. iConsultAesthetic has a dedicated server based in the UK for its cloud storage with disaster recovery built in. The company is also insured against hacking or unauthorised access.

For more information, please visit www.iconsult-aesthetic.com

Comparing Features

So you've seen the key players now available which are actively marketing their wares to aesthetic practitioners and clinic businesses. Although most do 'similar' things, there are certainly some key differences and different options available depending on your budget. There is certainly no 'one size fits all solution' I feel. Just like when you're buying a new television or working out who has the best utilities deal, the tricky part when it comes to choosing a patient record management or CRM system for your clinic business is comparing all the features available from the different providers and working out which solution truly fits best with your requirements. Most of the options available provide differing tiers of service offering, from free solutions with limited features to all the bells and whistles that a large clinic chain would require. In most cases many are happy to offer 14 day free trials so you can 'have a play' and test it out for yourself. I would absolutely recommend this 'try before you buy' option and only then can you really see whether the solution suits you and your way of working. Let's face it, there is nothing wrong with shopping around and you don't want to invest in something which you simply don't 'get on with'.

To try and summarise some of what we have learnt, I have compiled a comparison chart for the four applications previewed above which looks at the key features available on their most premium service option. This list is not exhaustive but should give an insight into the common and more unique features available. From this you should be able to decide which app to try first!

Please [CLICK HERE](#) to open up the comparison chart in PDF format.

Conclusion

Using paper and pen and a Polaroid to maintain patient treatment records is no longer a practical solution for any clinic. Using a computer and a digital camera was of course the next step up, but even that has drawbacks which make it hard to administer while in the consultation room with the client, leading to notes being typed up after hours and the contents of the camera being downloaded via a cable or memory card. Nowadays the solution is mobile technology and cloud based storage solutions. Any clinician who wants to be efficient and up-to-date really needs to consider how they should be embracing patient information and record keeping applications in their clinics.

There are some things to bear in mind, aside from the operating cost, many of which I have already highlighted such as offline use, data storage amounts and security, patient record keeping versus full blown CRM etc. Also, if like me you have not sold your soul to Apple and possess an iPad, but are in fact devoted to the Google Android mobile operating system (I have a Samsung Galaxy smartphone and tablet), then many of these software options are currently unavailable for Android, although some are addressing this; something to bear in mind though if you have already invested in your mobile technology.

Cloud computing and tablet based patient interaction during an aesthetic consultation and review is however an innovation which is here to stay I feel. Dr. Blakely summed up the sentiment by saying; *"there's no doubt in my mind that cloud based patient management systems will become the norm within our industry in the next five years."* I'm pretty sure it could be sooner than that!

Lorna Jackson



Lorna has been Editor of The Consulting Room™, the UK's largest aesthetic information website, for over a decade, since 2003. She has become an industry commentator on a number of different areas related to the aesthetic industry, collating and evaluating statistics and writing feature articles, blogs, newsletters and reports for The Consulting Room™ and various consumer and trade publications, including *Cosmetic News*, *Journal of Aesthetic Nursing*, *Aesthetic Medicine* and *Aesthetic Dentistry Today*. Lorna has also been asked to present at various industry events, including Smart Ideas, BACN and Merz Aesthetics Business Workshops, the FACE Conference and the Clinical, Cosmetic & Reconstructive Expo.
