

...with David Osler

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What does your role as Head of Knowledge in the CIRU entail on a daily basis?

I spend a lot of time working with the regions that I support on EDGE, ensuring that the host and partner organisations have everything they need. I spend time reading up on data security and data protection and applying this to the EDGE services because we host patient identifiable data, and therefore security is paramount. I also sit on the University of Southampton GDPR research working group. A lot of my job also involves strategy and organisational skills. I think about what functionality people want from EDGE and balance this demand with our resources. I need to consider the long-term view of where we want to take EDGE in the future, and how we are going to get there. These are quite big questions and there isn't always a right answer. Research changes quickly as well, so when I think I have found the answer, something usually comes along that requires me to rethink it all!

One thing that you love most about your job:

The people I work with, both in our team and all of our subscribers. We have a really good team at EDGE. Everyone gets on really well and we manage to work hard, but also have fun at the same time.



There are a real mix of personalities but they blend really well together. Our subscribers are amazing too, we have built up some really close relationships with people over the years and everyone we meet is happy to engage with us and have conversations about utilising EDGE to improve research. There is a lot of innovation going on with EDGE and that comes from the people using it on a day-to-day basis, and I think that says a lot about the mind-set of people in research, who are always wanting to improve and make things better. At the EDGE conference this year we heard Derek Stewart, Associate Director of Patient & Public Involvement & Engagement at the NIHR CRN talk about how all of this hard work ultimately improves clinical research for the benefit of the patient.

In general, which personal skills do you feel are enhanced by the deployment and familiarity of EDGE?

I think implementing EDGE offers a number of opportunities for Lead Administrators across hospitals.

Usually the Lead Administrators are based in R&D, and unlike old systems that work in silos, EDGE requires the engagement of everyone in research. So being in charge of its rollout means going and having interesting conversations to understand how other people work, and how they would fit into the system. Implementing EDGE also means learning about change management, data protection, project management, lean processing, data analysis, and a number of other skills that can all be developed and enhanced. Implementing EDGE also allows you to be creative. It allows you to dream up new ways of working together that have never been achieved before and to go and see if that dream is possible. I think to have the opportunity to do that in any workplace is amazing.

Describe one great thing that you think EDGE has achieved so far:

There are many great things that EDGE has achieved (I would say that though, wouldn't I).

But perhaps the greatest thing is the collaboration that is taking place both within hospitals and also across a network, across multiple networks, across the UK, and now across Canada. Using a single system has brought people together in a way that hasn't happened before, not because it wasn't possible, but because a common platform was not there. Now that there is a catalyst and relationships have now been created, the conversations have moved into the sharing of ideas and best practice across research in general, not just what is on EDGE.

One hope for the future of EDGE:

My hope is for a single research management system across the UK that benefits all research staff in all hospitals and provides real-time data to everyone involved. If this were to ever happen, this research platform would be an incredible opportunity to attract the best and most cutting edge research to the UK for the benefit of the patients who are desperate for access to the latest medicines and technologies.

One thing that you wish more people knew about EDGE:

That we are not a commercial company. We are a University department dedicated to improving clinical research by using technology to make research as efficient as possible, as effective as possible, and as accessible as possible.

One thing that always makes you laugh:

The quiz at our conference each year. Every year I try and make it good, yet it always seems to fall apart. It's not my strong point but people seem to enjoy it still.

One of your greatest achievements so far:

Almost getting eaten by a great white shark.

Favourite cultural destination:

Cape Town, minus the sharks.

One thing that you are most grateful for in your life:

Reggie, my half Daschund, half Jack Russell.

And finally (you can't get out of this one, I'm afraid, Dave), one piece of EDGE functionality that resembles your personality:

Delegation logs. They break the status quo and are trying to do things in a way that nobody has before.