HOW GALAXKEY HELPS UCL SECURELY SHARE CLINICAL TRIALS DATA

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The challenge: Safely sending confidential clinical trials data

The Medical Research Council Clinical Trials Unit (MRCCTU) carries out world-leading studies on infectious diseases and cancer. Housed within University College London (UCL), MRCCTU collaborates with the NHS, pharmaceutical companies, and other research institutes on a range of clinical trials.

This requires regularly sharing large amounts of data, including pseudonymised patient information, while making sure the data is kept completely secure in compliance with regulatory standards and best practice.

However, because different trials follow various operating procedures, MRCCTU staff were sharing data in several ways. These included transferring encrypted files via FTP servers and mailing out encrypted memory sticks. Or zipping and emailing encrypted files, then phoning in the password.

Each method had its own drawbacks. And although MRCCTU staff were ultra-diligent in ensuring data security, juggling multiple processes made things more complicated. UCL's IT analyst Paul Archer explains they wanted to make data sharing easier for staff while also minimising the risk of human error. MRCCTU needed an effective, reliable way to share clinical trials data – something extremely secure yet straightforward to use.

"We wanted to mitigate all that risk of human error in emailing data, of accidentally sending passwords and data together. We wanted to put measures in place that protect our data, and take that responsibility away from the end user."

The solution: Using Galaxkey's Secure Email and Secure Workspace to share data safely and easily

MRCCTU's IT team investigated options for securely sending emails and files. Galaxkey stood out because it offered ultra-strong encryption, but was easy to set up and use. In 2014, UCL installed Galaxkey's Secure Email and Secure Workspace products in the MRC clinical trials unit.

Galaxkey encrypts emails and their attachments at source, using a unique, triple-layer encryption that's virtually uncrackable. Once users are logged in, they can send as many secure emails as they want.

MRCCTU staff use Secure Workspace not only to store files, but also for sharing documents and secure online collaboration. After saving a file in their secure vault, they can email a link to that document or folder which enables the recipient to access it directly. MRCCTU manages the permissions for who can access and download different files.

This proved invaluable when MRCCTU discovered NHS staff weren't receiving their encrypted emails containing vital trials data. Because the NHS's email filtering system is particularly strict, it was blocking encrypted emails regardless of their source.

Once they realised the problem, MRCCTU staff simply switched to sharing files via Secure Workspace instead.

From set up to ongoing support, Paul has been impressed with the level of service Galaxkey provide.

> "I can confidently say to a staff member with a query, I'm certain I can get a response from Galaxkey within a day. That's very reassuring, it helps give faith in the product to the end users. And Galaxkey are always happy to listen to what we'd like to see from the development side. So we feel validated, listened to."

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The outcome: Enhanced data security and flexible online collaboration, with reduced human error

Now, MRCCTU has full confidence that all clinical trials data is securely protected while being shared and stored. Galaxkey helps UCL to meet their data protection regulatory obligations.

Since MRCCTU began using Galaxkey, the IT team now receive far fewer queries from staff on secure data management.

"Once staff had been trained and started using Galaxkey, it just became routine to them. It's a clear platform, they're confident in using it, and there's far less reporting of issues. It's even raised their standards around managing data – now they're thinking about how to do things better."

Galaxkey's automatic record-keeping of all emails is useful for tracing back issues arising. "Now if there's an issue we can look at the audit logs to identify what was happening. Galaxkey's made it simpler to follow that process."

UCL are still discovering new ways to use Galaxkey to achieve different objectives. They are increasingly using the Secure Workspace for live web-based collaboration, set so external partners can work on documents but not download them.

"Having that element of live collaboration, without the ability for others to download documents – it's something we're really benefiting from now, specifically with the number of COVID trials we've had in place since April 2020."

Interested in ultra-secure emails, file sharing, and online collaboration?

To learn more about how Galaxkey can help you safeguard your data or to book a demo, contact info@galaxkey.com

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