

**TABLE 1. ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF ICT IN HEALTHCARE**

Type of technology	Range of uses	Skills/technology needed	Advantages	Disadvantages
<b>Telephone</b>				
Landline and mobile phone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Person to person</li> <li>● Centralised decision system, such as NHS Direct</li> <li>● Direct contact for appointments</li> <li>● Basic information</li> <li>● Telephone counselling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Good telephone manner</li> <li>● Reading conversations without visual clues</li> <li>● Clear, concise approach</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Universal access</li> <li>● Quick and easy</li> <li>● In some counselling situations, patients may prefer not to see the nurse</li> <li>● Confidential</li> <li>● Can be recorded for training purposes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Others may have use of a patient's landline or mobile phone, compromising confidentiality</li> <li>● No written account of conversation</li> </ul>
SMS text messaging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Person to person</li> <li>● Centralised decision system, such as NHS Direct</li> <li>● Basic information</li> <li>● Appointments</li> <li>● Blood results</li> <li>● Brief support message</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Mobile phone technology</li> <li>● Text language</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Quick and easy</li> <li>● Patients can access at any time</li> <li>● Patients can refer back to the message</li> <li>● Record of conversation can be stored</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Some patients may not be able to access and/or use SMS</li> <li>● Not a formal core mode of communication in healthcare settings</li> </ul>
<b>Internet technologies</b>				
Email	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Person to person</li> <li>● Information alerts</li> <li>● Basic information</li> <li>● Appointments</li> <li>● Blood results</li> <li>● Support messages</li> <li>● Links to advice pages</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Keyboard skills</li> <li>● Use of email</li> <li>● Text based communication</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Quick and easy</li> <li>● Patients can access at any time</li> <li>● Patients can refer back to the message</li> <li>● Record can be stored</li> <li>● Can be asynchronous</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Many patients do not have access or skills to use email</li> </ul>
Web pages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Information</li> <li>● Announcements</li> <li>● Information source</li> <li>● Can provide substantive background information</li> <li>● Can be interactive</li> <li>● Can be used for self-assessment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Advanced skills in information management</li> <li>● Clarity about the purpose and scope of this source of information</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Easily accessible</li> <li>● Can be found via a search engine</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● A lot of information is available – the source needs to be credible</li> <li>● Information needs to be clear – needs visual clues as well as text</li> <li>● Navigation between pages needs to be clear</li> <li>● Employer may not have a web output policy</li> <li>● Needs technical support</li> </ul>
Internet chat rooms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Support from peer group to other patients with long term conditions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Skills in locating and/or designing purposeful online discussion groups</li> <li>● Skills in facilitating online discussion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Support from peers contributes to acceptance of long term conditions</li> <li>● Easy to access for many young people</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Comments can be misinterpreted and if not monitored or moderated misinformation can be generated</li> <li>● Usually peer led with limited professional input</li> </ul>
Webcam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Visual and audio interface</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Access to equipment</li> <li>● Skills in using visual and sound technologies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Patients appreciate opportunity for remote consultation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Some patients may not be able to access and/or use webcam</li> <li>● Not a formal core mode of communication in healthcare settings</li> <li>● Some people may feel uncomfortable with their image being on screen</li> </ul>
<b>Specialist diagnostic monitoring equipment</b>				
Electronic monitoring system including remote diagnostic equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Monitoring and evaluation of patients' condition</li> <li>● Information to aid clinical decision making</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Access to equipment</li> <li>● Skills in using technologies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Patients can take readings in their own time</li> <li>● Since they are engaged, patients tend to have better understanding of the reasons for taking readings</li> <li>● Can be used by technical experts such as paramedics to access remote assistance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● During an acute episode patients may not be able to take their own readings</li> <li>● Potential for professionals to become over-reliant on technology and forget to interact directly with patients</li> </ul>