“The solution sought to take advantage of advances in technology to make TOXBASE functionally more versatile and reduce the effort required to maintain its content”
The National Poisons Information Service (Edinburgh), one of four NPIS centres around the UK. The NPIS is a UK body commissioned by the Health Protection Agency and approved by the Department of Health providing expert advice on all aspects of acute and chronic poisoning.

**Challenge**

Since 1998 it has been Department of Health policy that the first point of contact for poisons information for health professionals in the UK should be TOXBASE. This database contains information on approximately 12,000 products, together with generic advice on the management of poisoning. It is available free of charge to registered NHS users.

By using TOXBASE, clinical staff can obtain key clinical information rapidly, including advice on potentially hazardous doses and appropriate management. Updates on TOXBASE are performed virtually every day for optimum levels of patient care. It is therefore an essential requirement that it be easy to add, delete and change poisons content as situations dictate. This imperative necessitated the need for a content management system to allow rapid amendment of the web-based system.

**Solution**

The present version of TOXBASE was established by directly transferring the previous Viewdata system into a Microsoft Access database. This meant that the system operated very much as a flat file system from the point of view of both editing the database and presenting it to the user base. The solution sought to take advantage of advances in technology to make TOXBASE functionally more versatile and reduce the effort required to maintain its content.

The foundation of the solution was EPiServer, a content management system that provided the key requirement of allowing the TOXBASE database to be managed through a series of forms and pages to be built from sections, thereby avoiding duplication.

The main features that EPiServer provided were:

- Editing carried out on a staging server, separate to the main server, and transferral of content changes to the live server(s) only when they are ready to go live.
- Content approval process i.e. content changed by an editor and subsequently approved by a manager.
- Versioning of content changes and capability to roll back.
- Making content changes with a specified live date in the future.
- Running two live servers, either load sharing or hot standby.
- Managing different user levels and restricting some content to a user with sufficient privileges.
- Content search, with restricted search depending on user level.
EPiServer offered a number of advantages that were key to ensuring its ongoing use by authorised staff. Above all, since using EPiServer is as simple as using a word-processing package, no special skills were needed to be able to create web pages; users are now able to create pages and publish them without any previous knowledge of HTML.

The EPiServer solution was implemented within three months and is hosted and supported by IS Solutions. All staff that are required to use the system have been trained in its operation. Plans are now in place to enhance the system through an extended search facility and to provide a disaster recovery environment for maximum system availability.

**Key Technologies:**
- EPiServer

**Key Activities:**
- Consultancy skills in defining and documenting precise requirements at the outset of the project.
- Development, implementation and testing of the content management system.
- Project management.
- Hosting and ongoing support of the database.
- Training of users in management of content.