The Medicine Support Service:
Referring Patients to Community Pharmacy at Hospital Discharge

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Introduction
Evidence shows that when patients move between care providers they are at risk of miscommunication and unintended changes to their medicines.

Around 87% of patients have an unintended discrepancy in their medicines discharge information which can lead to problems after hospital discharge and associated health consequences, many of which are preventable.

Community Pharmacists can help to improve patient outcomes after discharge with Medicines Use Reviews (MUR) and the New Medicine Service (NMS), but there is no systematic referral system in place.

By providing support to NHS Trusts and Local Pharmaceutical Committees (LPCs) wishing to implement an electronic referral system, we can help address the issue.

Patients can then consent to their discharge information being sent to their community pharmacists and consequently participating in MURs and the NMS, thereby addressing related issues:

• Up to 50% of medicines are not taken by the prescribed.
• 5-8% of unplanned admissions to hospital are due to medication issues.
• An estimated £300 million of medicines are wasted each year.

References

Objective
To support spread and adoption of an electronic referral to pharmacy scheme across the South West Converge, Devon and Cornwall by March 2017, creating a unified approach and sharing best practice to improve patient outcomes after hospital discharge.

Method
The Medicines Optimisation Lead at the SW AHSN carried out a scoping exercise involving online investigation and telephone calls to Trusts in Bristol, Devon and Cornwall. This helped to establish which Trusts, nationally, had referral systems in place and which IT platforms were in use.

Hospitals and pharmacies in Bristol and Devon were visited to observe their processes and share learning. Conversations with the National AHSN Network were also joined.

Meetings were attended with Somerset, Devon, Cornwall and Isles of Scilly LPCs and consequently with Cornwall and Nova NHS Trusts and our Medicines Optimisation Steering Group.

It was suggested that the SW AHSN develop a Support Pack to share learning and avoid duplication of work. PharmOutcomes was chosen as the platform for the electronic referrals.

Communication was maintained with presentations, ongoing meetings and conference calls, as a consequence, some of the remaining Trusts expressed an interest in adoption with the SW AHSN support.

Delays with various IT issues slowed progress. After ongoing communication with PharmOutcomes on behalf of all the organisations, information was shared to help understand the problems and solutions. Once these issues were resolved, progress continued and the Royal Cornwall Hospital was the first Trust in the South West to go live with the fully integrated referrals in January 2017.

Discussion
The completion rate of 46% is less than expected but an improvement on the previous system of faxing information.

The combination of a launch event and email support has not been adequate to ensure all pharmacists in Cornwall were aware of the processes required to complete the referrals. As a consequence, one-to-one telephone support was provided.

MURs were the most common intervention and provided opportunities for other types of support, especially the management of Monitored Dose Systems. With 43 MURs targeted at hospital discharge, and eight patients taking part in the NMS, community pharmacy is now filling a gap in the patient pathway, improving outcomes by helping 48 patients to understand the purpose of their medication and how to take it. Consequently, improving adherence and reducing medicines waste.

With only one Trust just eight weeks in, there is still much to learn about the barriers and enablers to success:

• Staff resources remain a barrier in the Trusts.
• One-to-one support to community pharmacists is vital to ensure success.

• The change in the hospital processes is still causing problems and the integrated referrals mean that there is no easy way of seeing the content.

With our support and collaborative working, we have demonstrated some success with system and behavioural change. We have helped to bring primary and secondary pharmacy sectors together.

The SW AHSN Implementation Support Pack has formed the basis of a National Toolkit being developed by the AHSN Network to which we are contributing.

Results
Collaboration: Feedback from the NHS Trusts, LPCs, PharmOutcomes, and the National AHSN Network has affirmed that the SW AHSN provided:

• Invaluable support and a conduit between the different organisations.
• Drive and impetus as well as creating summative documents to facilitate dissemination of information.

• Organisation, sharing of ideas, support with meetings, and hard work in contacting pharmacies.

Resources: The SW AHSN Implementation Support Pack is free to download from the website. It contains a selection of resources and is aimed at the AHSN Network, NHS Trusts and LPCs to share learning and avoid some duplication of work, thereby saving time and effort.

Patient Information: The model pilot was jointly named the Medicines Support Service. The SW AHSN Medicines Optimisation Steering Group (NHS Foundation Trust Communications Team) was developed to develop a logo, a leaflet and an animated video to share and aid patient understanding and consent. These are contained in the Support Pack.

Spread and adoption: As of March 2017, six of the seven acute trusts in the South West are planning for implementation by the end of 2017 amongst the Medicines Support Service title:

• The Royal Cornwall Hospital launched a fully integrated referral system in January 2017 completing over 250 referrals in the first eight weeks.
• Yeovil District Hospital NHS Foundation Trust began a pilot in March 2016. Ongoing staff resource has stalled progress. Plans for wider rollout remain after IT upgrades in summer 2017.
• Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trusts are launching a pilot in April.
• Dorset, Torbay and Plymouth Trusts are preparing for pilots in late 2017.

Launch Events: The SW AHSN has provided additional support by hosting launch events in Cornwall and North Devon, transforming the sector of pharmacy.

Outcomes of the referrals by the Royal Cornwall Hospitals NHS Trust are demonstrated in the graph below:

1. 256 Referrals in the first eight weeks

2. Services provided

3. As a result the patient has a better understanding of:

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