

Enhancing safe prescribing practices using thematic teaching: a quality improvement project

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Introduction

Safe prescribing is crucial, as it directly affects patient safety. Prescribing errors account for one-in-five medication errors in England, leading to 1,081 deaths.¹ The majority of these errors occur at time of admission² and therefore establishment of safe prescribing practices in the acute medicine unit (AMU) is fundamental to maintaining patient safety.

Objective

The aim of this project was to evaluate the prescribing practices in AMU against standards using recurrent plan, do, study, act (PDSA) cycles.

Methods and results

Drug kardex (n = 50) of patients admitted to AMU were evaluated, which showed non-compliance to standards in documenting allergy status, regular medications and cancelled medications. Staff survey (n = 50) showed low awareness of required standards with only 30% correctly answering the prescribing questionnaire. Therefore, an intervention consisting of a short video based on prescribing standards was designed and circulated. A prescribing checklist was also displayed in clinical areas for guidance. Moreover, we liaised with pharmacy to highlight common errors within the department and conducted thematic teachings to encourage safe prescribing practices. Post surveys (n = 50) showed significant improvement in staff knowledge with 70% scoring more than 50% on the questionnaire. Re-audit results (n = 75) showed significant improvements – 30% in documenting allergy status, 60% in documenting cancelled medication and 35% in prescribing regular medications.

Conclusions

Excellence in prescribing is challenging and is dependent on communicative and collaborative work within the team.² Working together with pharmacists can promote a safe culture by reporting adverse events alongside thematic teaching on reported errors to promote good patient care and safety.

References

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- 2 Routledge PA. Safe prescribing: a titanic challenge. *Br J Clin Pharmacol* 2012;74:676–84.

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