

Case Studies: the Refer-to-Pharmacy programme running between East Lancashire Hospitals NHS Trust and Community Pharmacies in Blackburn with Darwen and East Lancashire

What is Refer-to-Pharmacy?

Refer-to-Pharmacy is an electronic tool that allows for the bedside referral of patients in hospital to their community pharmacist for a post-discharge medicines consultation; or to update a patient's pharmacy record with any medication changes to improve safety.

Community Pharmacies are also informed of hospital admission for particular patient cohorts so they can stop dispensing, so as to reduce wasting medicines and save time within the pharmacy.

More information about Refer-to-Pharmacy can be found at <http://www.elht.nhs.uk/refer>

Refer-to-Pharmacy – improve safety

Betty had recently been in hospital. When Betty was discharged she was given a copy of her discharge letter, and her GP and community pharmacy were sent electronic copies from the hospital's new computer system. This discharge letter informs her GP and community pharmacist about any changes the hospital has made to her medication.

Things have changed since Betty was last in hospital. In the past her pharmacy would not have received an electronic copy of her discharge letter. The new system that has been set up by the hospital means her pharmacist can see straight away any changes to her medicines and understands if Betty will need any extra help with the changes made to her medicines.

Betty was getting a little confused as to when to take her medicines, so to help her take them on time, the hospital team put her tablets into special trays and has asked that her local pharmacy continues putting her medicines in to these special trays.

On leaving the hospital Betty has enough medicines to last her a week, giving her time to get a new prescription from her Doctor, and get it to her pharmacy.

At the pharmacy, the pharmacist checked Betty's prescription against the discharge letter and could see straight away that Betty's prescription did not include the changes made by the hospital. It was clear from the date on the prescription it had been printed before Betty came out of hospital.

The pharmacist explained to Betty that there would be a delay in her getting her tablets as they needed to contact her GP practice to ask them for a new prescription. Betty was happy with this and thanked the pharmacist for sorting it out for her.

Because the pharmacy had already received a copy of the Betty's discharge letter this allowed the pharmacy to understand that changes had been made to Betty's medication, and to get a new prescription. The fact that the pharmacy could see the most up-to-date notes meant Betty got her new medicines, and she could continue with the right medication.

Refer-to-Pharmacy – Reduction of waste

Alfred has his medication put into special trays which helps him to manage his medication better.

The local hospital has got a new system that is able to tell Alfred's community pharmacy when Alfred has had to go into hospital, so they can stop working on Alfred's trays until he can go home. When Alfred is ready to return home, the hospital system will then automatically tell the pharmacy that Alfred has been discharged and inform them of any changes made to his medication, so to expect a new prescription from Alfred's Doctor with these changes on there.

This way the pharmacy only has to make up the trays once, with the new updated tablets in there. The pharmacist also knows when Alfred comes in to the pharmacy, so they can talk to him about these changes to ensure he understands how to take his new medicines.

Because Alfred's pharmacy received notification electronically from the hospital that Alfred has been taken into hospital, they stopped working on Alfred's tray, which saves time in the pharmacy as they only need to work on his tray when he leaves hospital, and prevents any wasted medicines caused by dispensing a tray that is no longer needed as things have changed on his prescription.