



The Real Impact of Recruiting a Practice Pharmacist



Context

Primary care is facing an immediate and growing crisis with a reducing workforce and rising demand. GPs and their teams are estimated to make 370m patient consultations this year – 70m more than five years ago – due to an ageing population and more patients being treated for long-term and complex conditions. As demand has risen rapidly, the number of GPs in England has remained relatively stagnant.

The Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP) and the Royal Pharmaceutical Society (RPS) have made recommendations for practice pharmacists to help ease current work pressures in general practice. Practice pharmacists can contribute to improved patient safety and care and, crucially reduced waiting times for GP appointments. Commenting on the proposals, RCGP chair Maureen Baker said: “Waiting times for a GP appointment are now a national talking point – and a national cause for concern, not least amongst GPs themselves. But, even if we

were to get an urgent influx of extra funding and more GPs, we could not turn around the situation overnight due to the length of time it takes to train a GP. Yet we already have a ‘hidden army’ of highly-trained pharmacists who could provide a solution. Practice-based pharmacists, working as part of the clinical team, would relieve the pressure on GPs and make a huge difference to patient care.”

The plan also aligns well with the recommendation made in the recently published NHS Five Year Forward View - for community health services to make far greater use of pharmacists.

Prescribing Support Services can provide a fully managed pharmacist led service model which supports practices with a cost effective solution to address the workload associated with managing medicines.

Aim of the Service

To reduce GP workload and improve clinical capacity by utilising the skills of a pharmacist to complete prescribing related duties.

A nine doctor surgery in North Yorkshire contacted PSS in November 2014 to discuss commissioning a practice pharmacist service. The practice had identified that a significant amount of time was spent managing prescribing, reviewing medicines, medicines reconciliation of letters and discharge forms, repeat prescription re-authorisation, responding to patient medication requests and addressing patient adherence. GPs were often carrying out these tasks between seeing patients, after surgeries, later in the evening and sometimes even at weekends. Patients also expressed dissatisfaction with the time taken to process prescription requests and access medicines.

Following a scoping meeting to understand the practices aims and objectives a 5 sessions/week service was commissioned. The practice was supported by an experienced prescribing pharmacist.

Over the past 7 months the service has made a significant impact on addressing the workload challenges faced by the GPs. The practice benefited from having an existing experienced reception and administrative team who were trained to ensure the right person was allocated any tasks or queries. This helped to ensure that the GPs only received tasks, letters or queries that could not be dealt with by the pharmacist. As well as a direct impact on the clinical staff workload, the pharmacist was able to support the administrative team with some of their duties, improving overall practice efficiency (see figure 1).

Impact of Commissioning a Practice Pharmacist Service (since Dec 2014)

Most practices use GP time to carry out these tasks

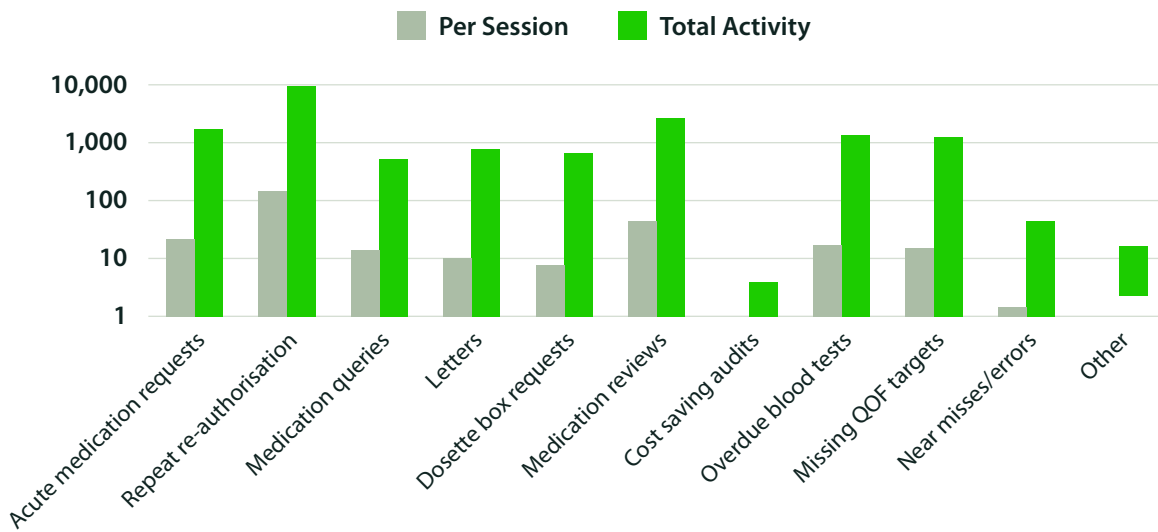


Figure 1. Recorded activity since the pharmacist service commenced

Next Steps

If you would like to discuss how your practice may benefit from a practice pharmacist or require any additional information please contact us at practice.pharmacist@nhs.net or 01274 299536.