Better medicines management
Advice for nursing staff and patients
Acknowledgements

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Wendy Fairhurst, Chair of the RCN Advanced Nurse Practitioners’ Forum

Jenny Aston (member of the RCN Advanced Nurse Practitioners’ Forum committee at the time of development)

Amanda Sherrat, member of the RCN Advanced Nurse Practitioners’ Forum.

Medicine Waste UK

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In January 2012, the RCN Advanced Nurse Practitioners’ Forum embarked on a project aimed at involving patients in prescribing decisions. It was evident from the literature available that this was an area in which nurses could be positive influences.

A joint study by York Health Economics Consortium and the School of Pharmacy, University of London in 2010 estimated the cost to the NHS of medicines wastage as £300 million annually. This included an estimated £90 million worth of unused prescription medicines retained in individuals’ homes at any one time, £110 million returned to community pharmacies over the course of a year, and £50 million worth of NHS supplied medicines disposed of, unused by care homes (Trueman et al, 2010).

The economic benefit of managing medicines better does not stop at reducing waste. The same study which identified where waste occurred, attempted to estimate the economic impact of poor medicines management at individual patient level. Costs flowing from poor control of chronic conditions with resulting complications and additional medical interventions were estimated to be in the range of £500 million per year (Trueman et al, 2010).

There is new emphasis on medicines optimisation, a broad term used to describe more than just medicines management. Rather it encompasses a “patient-focused, outcome-based and clinically-led approach to optimising medicines use which will be supported by research and innovation, including the clinical effectiveness of medicines in real clinical practice” (Royal Pharmaceutical Society, 2012).

This leaflet includes some headline tips for clinicians with a view to optimising the use of medicines and avoiding wastage. We have included a tool to help clinicians assess their effectiveness in talking to patients about medicines. Also included is a tear off guide for patients with tips on how to avoid waste and get the most from their medications.

More information about medicines optimisation can be found on the RCN Advanced Nurse Practitioners’ Forum website at www.rcn.org.uk/forums

We hope you find this useful.

Wendy Fairhurst
Chair, RCN Advanced Nurse Practitioners’ Forum
In partnership with the patient

Nursing staff should gain an understanding of:

• the patient’s lifestyle (social isolation, physical/psychological disability, organisational issues, employment issues)
• prescription payment options
• the patient’s level of understanding
• any practical issues around the taking of medicines.

Ensure the patient has an understanding of:

• what each medicine is for
• how long each medicine is to be used for
• the benefits of each medication
• any side-effects and how to manage them
• arrangements with pharmacists/carers
• how to safely dispose of unwanted medicines.
Three Cs of medicines reconciliation

The National Prescribing Centre (now integrated into NICE), developed a medicines reconciliation tool, intended to ensure that medicines prescribed on admission to secondary care correspond with those that the patient was taking prior to admission (NICE, 2007).

It outlined three Cs of medicines reconciliation:

- collecting an accurate clinical history to create a full list of current medications, using most recent sources of information
- checking this list against the most recent prescription and ensure that medication, formulation, route and dose are all appropriate
- communicate and document any changes.
It is important for nursing professionals to be able to assess the impact of their interventions. To assist practitioners in this, we have adapted the Howie patient enablement tool, which may be used following a medication discussion.

**Know your medicines**

For completion in conjunction with your patient.

As a result of your patient’s visit to a nurse or doctor today, do they feel they are...

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Much Better</th>
<th>Better</th>
<th>Same or less</th>
<th>Not applicable</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Able to cope with life</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Able to understand their illness/medicines</td>
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<td>Able to cope with their illness/medicines</td>
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<tr>
<td>Able to keep themselves healthy</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Confident about their health</td>
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<tr>
<td>Able to help themselves</td>
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**Scoring** / Much Better = 2 / Better = 1 / Same or less = 0


Medicine Waste is a social marketing campaign aimed at reducing the serious problem of wasted or unused medicines. More information is available at: www.medicinewaste.com (Accessed 6 March 2013 web)
Did you know?

• Unused prescription medicines cost the NHS in the UK an estimated £300 million every year. This could pay for...

• 11,778 more community nurses or
• 80,906 more hip replacements or
• 19,799 more drug treatment courses for breast cancer or
• 300,000 more drug treatment courses for Alzheimer’s or
• 312,175 more cataract operations.

Taken from www.medicinewaste.com
You can help by:

- ordering only what you need
- following the advice on the label
- letting us know if you stop taking any medicines
- returning unused medicines to the pharmacy
- only using medicines prescribed for you
- telling your pharmacist if they deliver medicines you don’t need
- telling us if you are taking other medicines (for example vitamins, supplements, herbal remedies etc).

We can help by:

- giving you more information and keeping it simple
- making sure you know when and how to take your medicine
- making sure you know how to order your medicine
- arranging blister packs/dosettes if necessary.
The RCN represents nurses and nursing, promotes excellence in practice and shapes health policies.

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