

Evaluating the Role of Patient Facing Pharmacists in a GP Practice Setting

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Background: An ever-increasing workload on General Practitioners (GP) has necessitated consideration of how the skills of the wider workforce may be deployed to meet patients' needs. Expanding the role of Pharmacists is one potential element of the solution (NHS England, 2014 & 2017).

The practices in the locality known as the 'Belper Five' identified the opportunity to enhance the model of primary care by incorporating dual role Medicines Management Clinical Pharmacists into their core practice teams.

The aim of the expanded role of Clinical Pharmacists in the Belper Five practices is to look after patients in such a way as to improve patient outcomes, reduce pressures on GP time, avoid hospital

admissions, reduce risk and improve the management of multi-morbidity and chronic diseases. The research centre was commissioned by the Southern Derbyshire's Medicines Management team to evaluate the impact of patient facing Clinical Pharmacists within the 'Belper Five'.

Objective: Exploring the role and impact of patient facing Clinical Pharmacists within the Belper Five.

Methods: Qualitative Research.

- Face to face semi-structured interviews with Clinical Pharmacists (n = 5) and GPs (n = 4).
- Analysis of transcribed interviews were conducted using conventional content analysis, aided by NVIVO.

Findings: Five key themes were identified:

Benefits to patients

"... having that little bit extra time to focus just on the medicines and not be worried about examinations that the patients have enjoyed"

Medicines management benefits

"we've [GP] definitely found that we've engaged more with the meds management side of it now that we've got a Clinical Pharmacist in practice"

Support

"I don't feel isolated at all, actually. I think I'm very fortunate with the practice I work at that all the GPs are very approachable and the nurses, the whole practice is very approachable. So I feel part of the practice team"

Benefits to the practice

"when appointments are stretched and you're limited for time, it's a much better use to have [a medication review] with the Clinical Pharmacist... our workload has gone down as a result"

Development

"We have done some work with communication skills... I think that's almost the biggest challenge... going from doing a role where actually, a lot of them haven't been seeing patients on a daily basis, yet they have got clearly a brilliant knowledge base, lots and lots of experience"

Discussion: The Medicines Management Clinical Pharmacists are an invaluable source of expertise on medication within the practice, for both the GPs and patients. Further, they are able to reduce GPs workload through seeing patients with chronic conditions and medication queries, allowing the GPs to concentrate on patients with acute conditions, described by one GP as *"The right clinician for the right patient"*.

The Clinical Pharmacist provides expert knowledge to the patient in the form of their clinics, with longer clinics allowing for more detailed medication reviews, an impartial conversation and a different perspective on their medication.

The potential scope of the Clinical Pharmacists role is broad, but limited by the time available. The practices should continue to carefully consider how the Clinical Pharmacists time is best spent.

References:

- National Health Service England (2014) *The NHS Five Year Forward View*. Available from <https://www.england.nhs.uk/five-year-forward-view> (Accessed 1/5/18).
- National Health Service England (2017) *Next Steps on the NHS Five Year Forward View*. Available from <https://www.England.nhs.uk> (Accessed: 1/5/18).