

# medway school of pharmacy

## LAY SUMMARY OF A RESEARCH STUDY

conducted in collaboration with Liverpool School of Pharmacy

### **Patients' need for information and support with medicines after discharge from hospital**

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#### **Why we did this study**

Most patients experience changes to prescribed medicines during a hospital stay. Making sure patients understand these changes is important for preventing adverse events after discharge. NHS surveys show that around a quarter of patients feel they do not get completely clear written or verbal information about their medicines while in hospital.

Community pharmacists can provide two free services which are aimed at helping people with medicine changes like these - Medicines Use Reviews (MURs) for patients discharged from hospital with two or more medicines and the New Medicines Service (NMS), for people starting a new long-term medicine.

#### **What we wanted to find out**

We wanted to find out what information was received by patients who experience medicine changes during a hospital stay and what support they may need after discharge with using their medicines.

#### **What we did**

We surveyed adult in-patients in six general hospitals who had all had changes made to their medicine regimen. We asked questions to find out what they had been told about these changes and any other information about their medicines during their stay. We also asked about their use of and preferences for information about medicines in general and what support they thought they may need after discharge.

We then interviewed a sample of these patients two weeks after they were discharged to find out what information and support they had actually needed since discharge; what they knew about the medicines which were changed during admission; any problems, including supply with medicines since discharge; and any interactions they had had with health professionals since discharge.

#### **Who we asked**

A total of 444 patients from the six hospitals completed the in-patient survey and 99 of these completed the interviews after discharge. 53% of those surveyed were female, 53% were aged over 65 and 88% reported using prescribed medicines prior to admission.

#### **What we found out**

##### ***The in-patient survey***

- 10% were not aware of changes having been made to their medicines during their admission
- 83% could remember having a new medicine added

- 38.5% felt involved in the decision to change their medicine
- 76% felt they had been given enough information and 77% understood the changes to their medicine, but there were differences between the hospitals in these proportions

The most common source of information about medicines which patients normally used was the GP (78%), followed by community pharmacists (30%). Compared to patients who got enough information during admission, those who did not receive enough information about their medicines during their hospital stay were more likely to feel they would need support after discharge regarding what their medicine was for, if it was working and with medicine-related worried.

#### ***The post-discharge interviews***

- 31% reported needing support with their medicines after discharge
- 83% said they knew enough about their medicines
- 59% had spoken to a health professional about their medicines since discharge

The type of issues patients described included:

- not knowing which medicines to continue taking
- how long to take newly prescribed medicines
- dose queries
- side effect queries
- wanting more information in general, particularly about new medicines or significant changes

Only 5 patients had had a discussion with a community pharmacist about medicines after discharge.

#### **What this means**

- Some patients are not aware of changes being made to their medicines while in hospital
- Patients often do not ask for information about their medicines while in hospital
- There are differences between hospitals in how much information patients receive about medicines and how involved they are in treatment decisions.
- Patients do not think about going to their regular pharmacist with problems they experience with medicine changes after a hospital admission, even though they may do so generally.
- The services which the NHS funds community pharmacists to provide for patients recently discharged from hospital with changes to their medicines are not being used.

#### **How you can use this research**

If you are admitted to hospital, always ask someone about any changes that are being made to your medicines, or get a relative to do so. Doctors, nurses or pharmacists should be able to answer your questions.

Consider discussing your medicines with your community pharmacist after you are discharged.

If you care for someone who is admitted to hospital, ask hospital staff about any changes to their medicines.

Questions you may want to ask: why have they been changed, what medicine should be stopped (if any), what started, how long should the new medicine be used for, how to get supplies, what to do if you have a problem.