

NHS Bristol – Innovative use of ScriptSwitch to reduce waste and cost whilst improving care for patients



About NHS Bristol

All 56 GP practices in NHS Bristol currently use ScriptSwitch to achieve cost savings and improve the quality and safety of prescribing. According to Jon Hayhurst, Medicines Management Pharmacist and ScriptSwitch project lead, a change in the GPs' prescribing habits has been achieved because the Medicines Management team has:

- Regularly updated the recommendation profile with prescribing messages that reflect the latest national and local guidance
- Asked for feedback from prescribers and acted on it
- Used ScriptSwitch Analytics to measure improvements in prescribing
- Used local newsletters and practice meetings to raise awareness of the improvements made

Improving prescribing of nutritional supplements using ScriptSwitch

The Medicines Management team at NHS Bristol identified that nutritional supplements represented the highest growth in cost in 2008/09 – estimated spend was about £722,000 per annum.

Practice pharmacists facilitated an audit in two GP practices that were spending the most on these products and local dieticians visited care homes to find out the cause of this increase in spend.

This exercise found that change was urgently needed in how nutritional supplements were prescribed, due to the fact that a large proportion of spend on these products was attributable to waste. There was a clear opportunity not only to reduce this waste but also improve care for malnourished patients.

The Medicines Management team knew that the prescribing of nutritional supplements was a very complex area needing a multifaceted approach. The first step was to implement better prescribing processes for nutritional supplements. This presented the team with a significant challenge in terms of already committing to a work plan to address other priority areas, for example, Better Care, Better Value indicators.

“ScriptSwitch has been well received in NHS Bristol. The example around sip feeds highlights an area that most GPs do not recognise as a problem. Most GPs would have simply complied with the request in the past without questioning either its validity as a therapeutic option, its appropriateness for that patient, or the potential cost to the local healthcare economy.

The prompt reminds the prescriber of more appropriate options, gives an instant link to self-help resources and reminds them to get an up-to-date weight.”

Dr Carole Buckley,
The Old School Surgery

The team needed to be innovative and therefore adopted a two-fold approach.

1. They did not start from scratch; instead they sourced and adopted:

- Nutritional Supplement Prescribing Guidelines from NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde (produced by dietitians/experts in the field of helping malnourished patients)
- A patient information leaflet about the use of nutritional supplements developed and used by NHS North Somerset

2. They took advantage of the fact that:

- ScriptSwitch was already installed in all 56 practices across NHS Bristol and used the software in a completely novel way: to improve the process for prescribing nutritional supplements.

Next steps

Similar ScriptSwitch prescribing messages are being developed for other areas of prescribing where prescribers have requested specific local guidance from specialists. For example, gluten-free products and wound-care dressings.

Sharing best practice

The Optum Medicines Management team is committed to working on a spread plan with NHS Bristol to ensure that this innovation is shared across the NHS. ScriptSwitch is already installed in 7,800 GP practices in England, Wales and Scotland. Users need only add the prescribing message to their recommendation profile once, after that ScriptSwitch will appear automatically at the point of prescribing. Information is provided at the right time to help the prescriber make an informed decision.

The impact on prescribing will be measured through the use of ScriptSwitch Analytics and learning from the best-performing practices that are using ScriptSwitch.

The innovation

Here are examples of the prescribing messages authored by the Medicines Management team:

Prescriber switches to the formulary choice and/or uses an acute prescription.

Prescriber is reminded to weigh the patient, check which flavour the patient prefers and to print the leaflet.

Any examples, suggestions, pharmaceutical products or appliances presented are solely to help customers understand the flexibility of the product, its aims and how it can be used.

What did they achieve?

Improvements in cost effectiveness

- Recurrent savings of up to £13,000 per month
- Less stockpiling in care homes through a reduction in quantities supplied on prescriptions
- Implementation of a local formulary

Reduction in waste

- Nutritional supplements only issued on acute prescription – less chance of treatment being continued over long periods of time
- Less stockpiling in care homes reduces risk of nutritional supplements going out of date
- Improvements in effectiveness
- Patient's weight assessed and recorded before a prescription was issued
- Appropriate referral to dietitians

Improvements in patient satisfaction

- Prescribing flavours that the patient likes improves adherence
- Providing self-help information leaflets ensures patients not only know how to get the most out of their prescribed nutritional supplement but also other ways to boost their calorie intake

