

6th April 2020

**To: All Local Pharmaceutical Committees across
North Cumbria, the North East of England, and Yorkshire**

Dear Colleagues,

COVID-19 response: Increasing the use of electronic repeat dispensing in general practice

On 31 March 2020, NHS England and Improvement published a letter that detailed the importance of maximising use of electronic repeat dispensing (eRD) as part of the Covid-19 pandemic response.

We are writing to you to inform you about an initiative coordinated by NHS England and Improvement and NHSBSA. There is variation in the utilisation of eRD across the region (North Cumbria, the North East and Yorkshire), with 479 General Practices at less than 5% usage of eRD. The aim of this initiative is to significantly increase the use of eRD during the pandemic and in the months following. ***We are in unprecedented times and must utilise every tool at our disposal to protect our teams and our patients.***

As you are aware, increasing eRD will help by:

- Significantly reducing the number of patient contacts and therefore the risks of transmission of the virus to healthcare professional teams in general practice and community pharmacy.
- In community pharmacy, there is evidence that by consolidating medication requests from patients into one monthly supply via eRD, the number of patient visits to community pharmacy and the number of pharmacy deliveries is reduced.
- Significantly reducing the prescription administration workload for general practice.
- Enabling local community pharmacies to better manage their workload.
- Supporting patients to follow the instruction to Stay at Home

As LPN Chairs we've been working with General Practices in Darlington on eRD for over 6 months, however COVID19 has increased the urgency and importance of eRD and so we've now been asked to lead a coordinated effort across the region. As part of that work we are linking in with LPCs, BSA, AHSN, and MO Colleagues as a priority.

The plan at short notice is to adapt our model to deliver virtual support for all practices but particularly for those with very low eRD utilisation. What this means is that we will be presenting three webinars over a three-week period for both EMIS and SystmOne, starting



week commencing 13th April, with a follow-up support from a small bank of Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) in eRD. We will also set up a central e-mail point for Practices to send their queries and these will be disseminated to SMEs who will get back to them with an answer by e-mail or, if necessary, by phone to the Practice within 24 hours.

Over the coming weeks, and obviously depending on the current usage of eRD in any given area, many of your Community Pharmacies will see a change to the way that whole cohorts of patients' prescriptions are issued. For example, 4 x 7 weekly tray prescriptions may change to a twelve-week issue of eRD. For clarity, we are asking all General Practices to notify local pharmacies of any changes, and equally, we are asking, via LPCs, all Community Pharmacies to be receptive to these communications, and to support any initiatives to set up more effective communication channels. We will be stressing to all General Practices, that effective communication with Community Pharmacies is crucial to success.

As Community Pharmacists ourselves, we know that this initiative will benefit Community Pharmacies over the long term. At the present time we appreciate that individual pharmacies have huge challenges every day however, we would urge you to re-enforce our message and ask that you support this initiative by communicating this information to your Community Pharmacies.

Thanks in advance for your support,

MJ Maguire 

Mike Maguire and Andre Yeung

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