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By email/post

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Dear xxx

Important - Assessing the costs and benefits of the Electronic Prescription Service

PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) are conducting an independent assessment of the costs and benefits associated with the Electronic Prescription Service Release 2 (EPS R2). This work will involve PwC visiting a sample of pharmacies from across the country in order to assess the costs and benefits to pharmacy contractors of using EPS compared to paper scripts. Your pharmacy has been randomly selected for inclusion in this work and we would be extremely grateful for your assistance with this important work.

Why is this work being undertaken?

As part of the community pharmacy funding settlement for 2015/16, PSNC agreed with NHS England that an independent assessment of the costs and use of EPS would be undertaken. A working group with members from PSNC, NHS England, the Health and Social Care Information Centre (HSCIC) and NHS Employers is leading this work and has asked PwC to undertake the independent assessment.

What are PwC going to do?

As an independent party, PwC have been tasked with obtaining and using independent evidence to assess the benefits and dis-benefits to community pharmacies of operating the EPS system, in particular:

- the time taken to manage the receipt, preparation, dispensing and claiming of prescriptions using EPS compared to paper scripts; and
- the frequency, severity and additional costs and/or time pressures relating to system issues with the EPS system.

In order to ensure accurate assessment of the time taken to use EPS each visit is expected to last up to one day.

Why is this work important for pharmacy contractors?

This work is vital to ensure that any additional costs associated with the use of EPS can be assessed and then considered in future funding negotiations. Pharmacies have been selected to take part in the work in order to reflect the range of pharmacy types (e.g. locations, script volumes and ownership type), extent of use of EPS and the range of Patient Medication Record (PMR) systems in use across England.

It is very important that different types of pharmacy participate in this work in order that the outcomes reflect the range of experiences of EPS across the community pharmacy sector. It is consequently important that having been

selected for involvement in the work, that your views and experience of using EPS are included and we hope that you will agree to be visited by PwC.

What happens next?

PSNC will contact you about the visit and to answer any initial questions you may have.

You should also be contacted by PwC by telephone within the next four working days so that they can arrange a suitable date to visit your pharmacy.

Further information on what will happen during the pharmacy visit is included in the Appendix to this letter. If you have further questions about this work or would like to discuss the issue with PSNC, please email Daniel.Ah-Thion@psnc.org.uk or phone 0203 1220 816.

Thank you for your co-operation.

Yours sincerely

Alastair Buxton
Director of NHS Services

Daniel Ah-Thion
EPS Lead

Appendix - Electronic Prescription Service (EPS) costing and benefits exercise 2016: PwC pharmacy visits

Overview

PwC are visiting a sample of pharmacies from across the country in order to assess the benefits, dis-benefits and costs to pharmacy contractors of using EPS compared to paper prescriptions. Your pharmacy has been randomly selected and therefore PSNC will call you to explain about the visit, answer any initial questions you may have and find out whether you are happy to participate in this important piece of work. PwC will also call you to arrange the day to visit. The visits are expected to last up to one day.

The visit will involve:

- an introduction to the work being undertaken;
- a discussion about prescription processes within your pharmacy;
- a time and motion study; and
- finally an interview to collect more information on the pharmacy team's experience of EPS.

To help make the PwC visit as efficient as possible, you may wish to share standard operating procedures (SOPs) with PwC ahead of the visit. This will allow the PwC team member who will be visiting you to familiarise themselves with your dispensing procedures before arriving at the pharmacy. If you are happy to do this, please let the PwC team member who phones you know and they will then provide you with details of where to send copies of your SOPs.

1. Introduction

The PwC team member will arrive at the agreed time and date, present relevant identification, introduce themselves, sign a confidentiality agreement between your pharmacy and them to ensure they will keep confidential any sensitive personal data they see during the visit, and ensure that the pharmacy team are aware of the nature and purpose of the visit.

2. Discussion about the processes for EPS and paper prescriptions at your pharmacy

PwC will speak with the pharmacist to understand the pharmacy's processes. PwC's study will involve measuring the time needed for the pharmacy team to carry out specific 'touchpoints' – parts of the dispensing process. Before any timing can be conducted, PwC will first need to map their touchpoints to your SOPs.

The discussion will encompass both the electronic and paper dispensing processes. PwC will also discuss with you how they will incorporate different prescription paths, e.g. walk-in or prescription collection service.

3. Time and motion study

Having mapped their touchpoints to the pharmacy SOPs, PwC will use a laptop and spreadsheet to measure the time taken to process electronic and paper prescriptions - from the point of receipt to them being claimed for.

PwC will ensure there is no bias in the selection of prescriptions, and will aim to time consecutive prescriptions as they are processed. PwC will continue to time processes if and when activities occur that prevent the paper or electronic prescription travelling down the optimum dispensing path, e.g. if the PMR system experiences temporary difficulties, or if the system supplier or the GP practice need to be contacted.

If an event occurs that sits outside the scope of the touchpoints, such as an unrelated customer requiring the time of the pharmacist, PwC will pause the study and not include this time.

Where possible PwC wish to follow the journey of a prescription but they recognise a single prescription may not complete its journey through all identified touchpoints during the course of the PwC visit. In this instance PwC will 'top up' any required testing with alternative prescriptions so that all touchpoints can be timed.

4. Interviews with pharmacy staff

Finally, PwC will use further questions and observations to gather insights from the pharmacy team. Some of these questions will also overlap with those included in a more widely available online survey which all pharmacy teams will be encouraged to complete over the next few weeks.