My Primary Care Placement Experience
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Background
- As a third year pharmacy student, my knowledge and experience of the pharmacist’s role within the primary care sector, more specifically within a Commissioning Support Unit was very limited. As a result of this placement with the Arden & Greater East Midlands CSU Medicines Optimisation Team, I have gained an invaluable and unforgettable insight into the functioning structure of the NHS and the wide variety of roles within the team in order to deliver excellent outcomes for its customers and patients alike.
- Specifically, this placement has enabled me to apply my existing knowledge developed from the MPharm course at the University of Birmingham to the principles of Medicines Optimisation, whether it be when I visited practices within South Warwickshire aiding the Practice Support Pharmacists with switches, designing audits to support this work and medication reviews or when I completed a number of projects with the aim to improve prescribing at practice level.
- During the eight week placement, I had the opportunity to complete numerous different projects reflecting the variety of work undertaken within the Medicines Optimisation (MO) Team;
  1. Improving Antibiotic Prescribing In Primary Care
  2. Designing of a poster raising awareness of inappropriate requests for paracetamol on prescription & potential cost savings for the local healthcare economy across South Warwickshire CCG

Project: Improving Antibiotic Prescribing in Primary Care
- Antibiotics are an essential tool in modern medicine with a wide range of indications, however antibiotic resistance is a serious danger to public health and is driven by a number of factors, one of which is inappropriate prescribing of antibiotics;
  - The proportion of cough and cold diagnosis’s for which antibiotics were inappropriately prescribed had increased from 36% in 1999 to 51% in 2011 (1)
  - The Welcome Report investigated patients perceptions towards antibiotics in which some felt that obtaining antibiotics after a consultation was proof that they have a ‘real illness’ (2)
- As a result, it is important to help improve antibiotic prescribing and encourage patient education around the effectiveness and responsible use of antibiotics in order to achieve the ultimate aim to preserve antibiotics for the future.

Implications for General Practice
- Information around the issue of resistance along with practical recommendations regarding the prescribing of antibiotics in line with local APC guidelines were provided in an edition of the bi-monthly Pharmaceutical Fortnightly Focus newsletter, designed as part of the project. The release of this newsletter will coincide with European Antibiotics Awareness Day (EAAD).
- Practices will be encouraged to use resources such as TARGET, which is a free toolkit comprised of a suite of resources to promote appropriate antibiotic prescribing.
- We will encouraged GPs to use delayed prescriptions where clinically appropriate.
- Practice’s antibiotic prescribing trends were reviewed and practices identified as an outlier was identified with an aim to reduce antibiotic prescribing.
- I designed an antibiotic audit for practices identified as outliers to complete.

Benefits to Patients
- The use of patient information resources (to better aid consultations) were highlighted as beneficial for use in community pharmacies. We will continue to encourage the use of such resources via the Local Pharmaceutical Committee (LPC).
- Short, easy to understand tweets were composed to signpost patients to informative websites to give appropriate self-management advice for symptoms indicative of a viral infection – these will be tweeted on and around EAAD.
- Empower patients with information on antibiotic resistance.
- The ultimate benefit to patients is to safeguard the use of antibiotics now and for future generations ensuring patients outcomes are not jeopardised.

As part of my placement, I was asked to design a poster for NHS South Warwickshire CCG to highlight to patients the potential savings associated with unnecessary ordering of paracetamol on prescription, if it is not needed regularly. The poster aimed to educate patients with:
- A number of key facts demonstrating what other areas of patient healthcare the money saved could have been invested into to make it more relatable to the patient.
- The facts were formatted as pharmacy dispensing labels to make it more visually effective.

Project: Designing poster for patients to raise awareness of inappropriate requests on prescription of paracetamol in all forms.

“Everyone has a part to play to help tackle antibiotic resistance, make a change now:”
(www.antibioticguardian.com)

“Did you know that antibiotics will have little benefit in treating your cold? Find out more at www.treatyourselfbetter.co.uk”

Figure 1: Examples of informative tweets tailored for the general public

Figure 2: Screenshots of the Pharmaceutical Fortnightly Focus to inform primary care clinicians around the issue of antibiotic prescribing

Figure 3: Poster designed for use within NHS South Warwickshire CCG.