

# Prescribing in primary care

Enhancing your knowledge on pharmacological therapy, your understanding of the prescribing process and developing your prescribing skills during your GP clinical placement



Almost half of all adults take at least one prescription drug in the UK. In Northern Ireland the expenditure on GP prescribed products is in the region of £444m annually relating to nearly 43m prescription items (HSC BSO 2019/2020). During the Undergraduate GP clinical attachment there are ample opportunities to learn about when, how and what to prescribe and to be involved in the process of issuing, checking and reviewing repeat medications ensuring this is done in a safe, patient-centred and efficient way.

The General Medical Council (GMC) requires medical doctors to be able to prescribe drugs safely, effectively and economically at point of qualification (GMC 2018 and 2020). Newly qualified doctors feel they are poorly prepared for the tasks associated with prescribing (VR Talentir ea. 2011) and there are many compelling arguments, including the possible reduction in errors made by junior doctors, for better preparing graduates for the complexities of prescribing in the clinical workplace (T. Dornan ea. 2009, J. Illing ea. 2013, C. Ryan 2014).

The following is a list of subjects related to prescribing in Primary Care with useful links and possible learning activities which could be considered during Undergraduate GP Placements

Theme	Sub-theme	Links	Learning activities
Understand the governance and processes around prescribing	Prescribing safety especially around high risk medications eg. Warfarin, amber -list drugs	<a href="https://www.sps.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/17_Policy_NPSA_18_AC_NELondonFT_Aug08.pdf">https://www.sps.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/17_Policy_NPSA_18_AC_NELondonFT_Aug08.pdf</a>  <a href="http://www.ipnsm.hscni.net/red-amber/">http://www.ipnsm.hscni.net/red-amber/</a>	Join the GPN during a INR clinic  Talk to the GPN or practice manager how the safety prescribing of DMARD/amber list drugs is organised in the practice
	Repeat and acute prescribing protocols		Ask the tutor or practice manager for a copy of their Acute and

			repeat prescribing protocols
	Post-discharge medication reconsolidation		Join the GP-prescriber to reconsolidate medication after a patient's discharge  Ring a patient to discuss the changes in medication after discharge
	Medication reviews	<a href="https://www.pfni.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/A-Guide-to-Support-Medication-Review-in-Older-People-May-2020.pdf">https://www.pfni.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/A-Guide-to-Support-Medication-Review-in-Older-People-May-2020.pdf</a>  <a href="https://www.pfni.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Pharmacy-Forum-Clinical-Guidance.pdf">https://www.pfni.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Pharmacy-Forum-Clinical-Guidance.pdf</a>  <a href="https://www.sps.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Drug-monitoring_October-2017.pdf">https://www.sps.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Drug-monitoring_October-2017.pdf</a>  <a href="https://www.sps.nhs.uk/articles/suggestions-for-therapeutic-drug-monitoring-in-adults-in-primary-care-2/">https://www.sps.nhs.uk/articles/suggestions-for-therapeutic-drug-monitoring-in-adults-in-primary-care-2/</a>	Ask your tutor or the GP-pharmacist to get a list of eg. 5 patient who need a medication review- conduct the medication review using available guidelines and EB-resources- discuss with the supervisor
	SEA and Adverse Events	<a href="https://www.rcgp.org.uk/-/media/Files/CIRC/Patient-Safety/Reporting-and-learning-from-patient-safety-incidents.ashx?la=en">https://www.rcgp.org.uk/-/media/Files/CIRC/Patient-Safety/Reporting-and-learning-from-patient-safety-incidents.ashx?la=en</a>	Attend a Governance meeting

Get an understanding of what medications are mostly prescribed in a primary care setting	COMPASS report	<a href="https://www.medicines.ni.com/about/compass.asp">https://www.medicines.ni.com/about/compass.asp</a>	Ask the practice manager for the latest COMPASS report of the practice  Study the report  Ask your tutor questions about the report
	Repeat prescriptions		Take a 'bunch' of signed repeat prescriptions- go through them to get a feel of what medications are frequently prescribed as repeats and how
Understand the role of a GP-Pharmacist in General practice		<a href="https://www.pfni.org.uk/about-us/get-involved/interestgroups/gppni/">https://www.pfni.org.uk/about-us/get-involved/interestgroups/gppni/</a>	Observe a GGP 'in action'- use the Template in your e-logbook
Understand the role of the community pharmacist		<a href="https://psnc.org.uk/psncs-work/about-community-pharmacy/">https://psnc.org.uk/psncs-work/about-community-pharmacy/</a>  <a href="https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/publications/community-pharmacy-explained">https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/publications/community-pharmacy-explained</a>	'Follow the script(s)'- select 3-4 prescriptions of the 'bunch' of repeat scripts in the morning. Join the pharmacist in the community pharmacy in the afternoon and observe how the prescription is checked and dispensed (C. Cooke ea. 2017)
Learn there are different prescribers in primary care	Independent non-medical prescribers Medical prescribers	<a href="https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/articles/pharmaceutical-non-medical-prescribing">https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/articles/pharmaceutical-non-medical-prescribing</a>	
Learn how to prescribe and de-prescribe	Evidence based prescribing	<a href="https://bnf.nice.org.uk/">https://bnf.nice.org.uk/</a>  <a href="https://www.medicines.ni.com/courses/compassnotes.asp">https://www.medicines.ni.com/courses/compassnotes.asp</a>	Explore how the GP Clinical Systems are directly linked with the BNF online  Take a few acute scripts of the day and

		<a href="https://www.medicinesni.com/courses/elearning.asp">https://www.medicinesni.com/courses/elearning.asp</a>  <a href="https://cks.nice.org.uk/">https://cks.nice.org.uk/</a>  <a href="https://viewer.microguide.global/guide/1000000198">https://viewer.microguide.global/guide/1000000198</a>  <a href="https://www.guidelinesinpractice.co.uk/the-national-prescribing-centre/305502.article">https://www.guidelinesinpractice.co.uk/the-national-prescribing-centre/305502.article</a>	check them against prescribing guidelines
	Writing a prescription	<a href="https://www.e-lfh.org.uk/programmes/prescribing-simulator/">https://www.e-lfh.org.uk/programmes/prescribing-simulator/</a> (need an e-LfH account)  <a href="https://help.loomermedical.co.uk/m/86389/l/1186381-deferring-printing-of-prescriptions">https://help.loomermedical.co.uk/m/86389/l/1186381-deferring-printing-of-prescriptions</a>	<p>Prescribing simulator (need an e-LfH account)</p> <p>The (virtual) 'purple pen' option:  'Write' an actual script on EMIS under your own User name- store-discuss/edit and print with your tutor-</p> <p><i>(able to change prescriber's name before printing or does rx have to be re-written- check Vision/other clinical systems?)</i></p>
	Patient counselling on starting or stopping a medication	<a href="https://products.mhra.gov.uk/">https://products.mhra.gov.uk/</a>  <a href="https://www.medicines.org.uk/emc#gref">https://www.medicines.org.uk/emc#gref</a>  <a href="https://patient.info/doctor/decision-aids">https://patient.info/doctor/decision-aids</a>  <a href="https://www.evidence.nhs.uk/search?q=patient%20decision%20aids">https://www.evidence.nhs.uk/search?q=patient%20decision%20aids</a>	<p>Observe GGP</p> <p>-Student list of 2-3 patients needing counselling on starting/stopping medication eg. statins, bisphosphonate, recommendations by secondary care- under supervision of GP- Pharmacist</p>

			-Consider using a Patient Decision Aid
	Use the Northern Ireland Formulary	<a href="https://niformulary.hsc.ni.net/">https://niformulary.hsc.ni.net/</a>	

### Links and references:

British Pharmacological Society <https://www.bps.ac.uk/education-engagement/prescribing-and-patient-safety>

Cooke C., G. Gormley, S. Haughnet, J. Barry. Tracing the prescription journey: a qualitative evaluation of an interprofessional simulation-based learning activity. Caoimhe Cooke, Gerard J Gormley, Sharon Haughey, Johanne Barry. Advances in Simulation, Vol 2, Iss 1, Pp 1-8 (2017)

Drug and Therapeutic Bulletin (for BMA members or via OpenAthens/e-LfH) <https://dtb.bmj.com/>

e-Learning for Health <https://www.e-lfh.org.uk/programmes/prescribing-simulator/>

Electronic Medicine Compendium <https://www.medicines.org.uk/emc#gref> (last accessed January 2021)

Dornan T, Ashcroft D, Heathfield H, Lewis P, Miles J, Taylor D et al. An in depth investigation into the causes of prescribing errors by foundation trainees in relation to their medical education – [https://www.gmc-uk.org/-/media/documents/FINAL\\_Report\\_prevalence\\_and\\_causes\\_of\\_prescribing\\_errors.pdf\\_28935150.pdf](https://www.gmc-uk.org/-/media/documents/FINAL_Report_prevalence_and_causes_of_prescribing_errors.pdf_28935150.pdf) (last accessed January 2021)

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Illing J, Morrow G, Rothwell C, Burford B, Baldauf B, Davies C et al. Perceptions of UK medical graduates' preparedness for practice: A multi-centre qualitative study reflecting the importance of learning on the job. BMC Medical Education. 2013;13(1).

Medicines & Healthcare products Regulatory Agency

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/medicines-and-healthcare-products-regulatory-agency>  
(last accessed January 2021)

Medicines Northern Ireland <https://www.medicinesni.com/>

National Prescribing centre <https://www.guidelinesinpractice.co.uk/the-national-prescribing-centre/305502.article> (last accessed January 2021)

NICE guidelines <https://cks.nice.org.uk/> (last accessed January 2021)

Northern Ireland Formulary <https://niformulary.hscni.net/> (last accessed January 2021)

Patient decision aids: An introduction to patient decision aids, BMJ 2013; 347 doi:

<https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.f4147> <https://patient.info/doctor/decision-aids>  
<https://www.evidence.nhs.uk/search?q=patient%20decision%20aids>

Purple pen:<https://eprints.keele.ac.uk/5709/1/A%20Hassell%20-%20The%20role%20of%20purple%20pens%20in%20learning%20to%20prescribe%20Final.pdf><https://www.uhnmkeelemedics.co.uk/purple-pen-policy/> (last accessed January 2021)

RCGP (2017) Reporting and Learning from patient safety incidents available at

<https://www.rcgp.org.uk/-/media/Files/CIRC/Patient-Safety/Reporting-and-learning-from-patient-safety-incidents.ashx?la=en>

Ryan C, Ross S, Davey P, Duncan E, Francis J, Fielding S et al. Prevalence and Causes of Prescribing Errors: The PRescribing Outcomes for Trainee Doctors Engaged in Clinical Training (PROTECT) Study. PLoS ONE. 2014;9(1):e79802.

Spencer R, Avery A, Serumaga B and Crowe S (2011). Prescribing errors in general practice and how to avoid them. Clinical Risk;17(2):39-42. doi:10.1258/cr.2010.010072.

Tallentire VR, Smith SE, Skinner J, Cameron HS. The preparedness of UK graduates in acute care: a systematic literature review. Postgraduate Medical Journal. 2011;88(1041):365-371.

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