Community Pharmacy

Shared care in the community

Community Pharmacy and Shared Care

Community pharmacies interact with patients constantly. Dispensing medications is more than a one way process. Many medications require monitoring of lab results, drug interaction checks, gauging patient symptoms and wellness factors.

While pharmacy information systems provide valuable means to manage medication dispensing, they are an island in terms of the bigger patient picture as they do not contain patient information from other healthcare providers.

Background

In the Auckland and Northland region, over 3 million patient records are stored in the CareConnect TestSafe database which has evolved over the last decade. The database is the Sysmex Eclair clinical data repository (CDR).

The Eclair CDR includes laboratory, radiology and other diagnostic results, discharge summaries, eReferrals, clinical letters, medications and other patient documentation drawn from DHB facilities and community laboratories across the region[1].

Since 2011, dispensing records from community pharmacies have been added to the TestSafe database and nearly 400 community pharmacies across the region send dispensing data to TestSafe[2]. There are now over 118 million individual dispensing records in the system[3].

Community pharmacists have secure access to TestSafe so they can see what medications a patient has already been dispensed from other pharmacies in the region, as well as access relevant lab test results and hospital discharge summaries (including hospital medication lists) as needed for patient management.

The Eclair CDR TestSafe holds over 3 million patient records which include over 118 million dispensing records.

Shared Care

To facilitate shared care in the community, pharmacists play a key role in ensuring that patients are on the correct meds and dosage, and are not at risk of drug interactions. Being able to see what has already been dispensed to a patient from other pharmacies assists with this.

Grey Lynn pharmacist Sunil Kumar says that TestSafe helps him to ensure accuracy and patient safety. "We regularly use TestSafe to check the accuracy of prescriptions against previously dispensed meds. By doing this we have had occasions where we have picked up on incorrect dosages and on medications that have been unintentionally missed from a prescription."

Pharmacists can also proactively review relevant lab test results. "Being able to see lab results at the point of dispensing is invaluable," says Mr Kumar, "for example, fluctuations in the HbA1c level can provide an indication of patient compliance when they are taking metformin. We can remind the patient about compliance if we have any concerns."

Further along the care path, if a patient is admitted to hospital, secondary care healthcare providers in the Auckland region use the same shared database. They too, are able to see a complete summary of dispensed medications from community pharmacies, saving time chasing dispensing records and enabling them to establish the correct meds and dosage as soon as possible post-admission.

Another pharamcist who works with Mr Kumar, Priscilla Park, reveals that prior to medication information being included in the TestSafe system she would frequently receive calls from the hospital enquiring about a patient's medication. "It can be a time-consuming process to look up a patient's history and then repeat all this information over the phone to the hospital pharmacist. Now that medication information has been included in the TestSafe database, hospitals can see this for themselves, and the number of calls we receive has dropped dramatically. Hospitals now only call us occasionally if they need to confirm something."

"Being able to see lab results in Eclair at the point of dispensing is helpful, for example fluctuations in the HbA1c level can provide an indication of patient compliance when they are taking metformin."

Sunil Kumar - Grey Lynn Pharmacy

TestSafe also includes clinical documents, such as discharge summaries, clinic letters and surgical documents from the region's secondary care facilities. When patients are discharged from hospital, Mr Kumar and Ms Park both agreed that it is beneficial to be able to access the discharge summary report in TestSafe. "We use the discharge summary to reconcile meds on the patient's discharge prescription."

Patient Confidentiality

The TestSafe system includes an opt-off option, so patients can disallow their records from being shared with other health practitioners. In the case of medication information, a notice alerting patients that their prescription information will be sent to TestSafe is on the bottom of their pharmacy receipt. There are also instructions on how to opt out of the process.

TestSafe maintains a full audit trail of access. Where a practitioner accesses the records of someone who is not their regular patient, they are required to enter a legitimate reason. Mr Kumar states that on occasion he has had calls from TestSafe checking why he has accessed a particular patient record. In each case he has had a legitimate reason, however, he says it's reassuring to know that the audit process is so thorough.

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Priscilla Parks - Grey Lynn Pharmacy

[1] http://www.careconnect.co.nz/testsafe/

[2] https://www.sysmex.co.nz/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Regional_CDR_Case_Study_V3_Web1.pdf

[3] Susan Hedges, healthAlliance; 2016 Sysmex User Group presentation, "The Northern Region's Eclair CDR Experience - TestSafe Customer Case Study"

Eclair is not a medical device as it does not have a therapeutic purpose.