

Empowering New Prescribers: Enhancing Confidence in Prescribing High-Risk Medicines to Reduce Patient Harm

Introduction

Prescribing errors contribute significantly to preventable patient safety incidents. The PROTECT programme¹ underscores the correlation between prescribing errors and the experience and self-assurance levels of prescribers; revealing that those with limited familiarity or confidence are more prone to mistakes.

Errors are often related to high-risk medicines (opiates, insulin, anticoagulants, and antibiotics with narrow therapeutic indices). We delivered interactive educational sessions within a supportive framework to new doctors (FY1s) and international medical graduates (IMGs) enhancing their understanding and improving confidence in prescribing high-risk medicines, ultimately reducing patient harm.

Methods

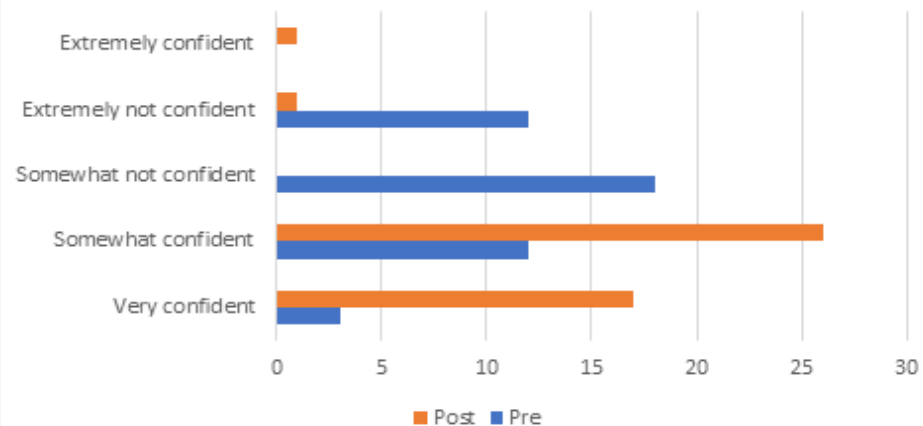
A series of face-to-face workshops (August-September 2023) were designed based on anonymised learning summaries from high-risk medicine incidents. Facilitators introduced the local prescribing charts, local prescribing guidelines, and familiarised participants with the electronic prescribing system. To optimise active participation, each session was limited to a small group (10-15 participants). Participants actively engaged in prescribing activities based on clinical case scenarios using local prescribing charts in a supportive environment.

What we did? Ran supportive prescribing workshops for new prescribers.

Why we did it? Individuals benefit from support when new to prescribing or to the local system.

What we achieved? Greater confidence and experience in prescribing across key risky medicines.

Confidence Pre- and Post Session Survey (n=45)



Results

To gauge effectiveness, participants completed pre- and post-session surveys. There was a notable increase in average confidence levels (Figure 1). The sessions were rated highly (9.47 out of 10), underscoring their relevance and value. Nearly half of the participants (48.2%) expressed a desire for ongoing prescribing support post-workshops.

Conclusion

Initial confidence assessments revealed a need for comprehensive training in local prescribing practice. This was addressed by targeted, structured, supportive workshops with focus on interactive engagement. Post-workshop surveys highlight the value of early engagement in tailored educational interventions for new prescribers in enhancing their competence and confidence.

Further work

With new prescribers increasingly undertaking pre-clinical training outwith GGC, further work is needed to increase the scale of this work. We aim to cover the full FY1 cohort, and other cohorts of new NHS prescribers, at the start of their rotations.

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References

1. Ross S, Ryan C, Duncan EM, et al; Perceived causes of prescribing errors by junior doctors in hospital inpatients: a study from the PROTECT programme; *BMJ Quality & Safety* 2013;22:97-102.