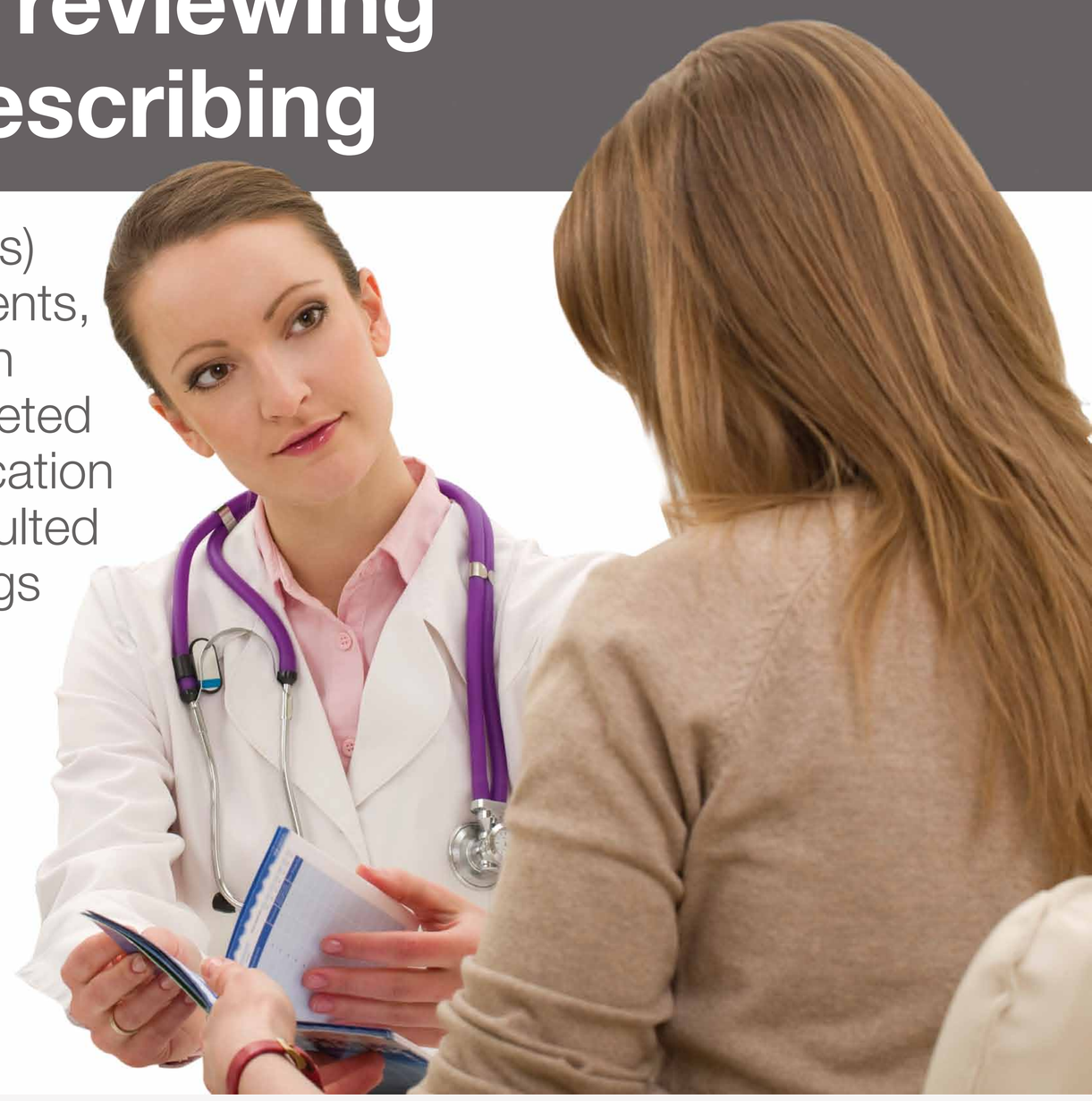
Mount View

The way to medicines optimisation is through the stomach – reviewing proton pump inhibitor prescribing



At NHS Fylde & Wyre, proton pump inhibitors (PPIs) were being prescribed for nearly a tenth of all patients, raising questions about whether prescribing was in line with NICE guidance on dyspepsia. A multi-faceted approach, including audit, primary care team education sessions and supporting materials for patients resulted in a reduction in medication use, annualised savings of over £5600, and high patient satisfaction.

"Patient feedback helped dispel the perception that patients would be unwilling to consider coming off PPIs and encouraged regular discussion around self-management and lifestyle modification in future."

Diane McGinn, Medicines Management Pharmacist, NHS Fylde & Wyre

Overcoming barriers to reducing PPI use

Although the use of PPIs has been a national QIPP therapeutic review area, the issue of ever-increasing usage (10% yearly increase in North West England) and whether patients were treated in line with the NICE guidance on dyspepsia were not being addressed.

An audit across the three GP practices in Fylde & Wyre on the scale of PPI usage, the indications and links with other medicines prescribed, showed that together with high PPI usage (5-11%) the majority of patients were also prescribed four or more other medications, and therefore should be having their PPI use reviewed annually in line with the QOF.

NICE guidance recommends reviewing PPIs taken for dyspepsia at least annually, with a return to self-care with antacids and/or alginates, but in reality stopping PPIs can be difficult due to symptom recurrence.

Tailoring education and advice

The review focused on a package of support aimed at encouraging healthcare professionals to review PPI use as part of a full medication review, whilst at the same time encouraging and supporting patients to self-manage their symptoms. Patients were mainly seen by practice nurses in chronic disease clinics, so this setting became the main focus for the reviews.

Tailored education sessions ensured that healthcare professionals felt equipped and able to advise patients – gastro-nurses attended practice nurse education sessions and a consultant gastroenterologist provided GP education sessions and answered wider questions around diagnosis and management. This was backed up with evidence-based protocols based on the audit results. For example, many patients were taking PPIs for gastro-protection due to the use of NSAIDs or SSRIs (including in some cases where, contrary to current guidance, patients had been prescribed aspirin for primary prevention of cardiovascular disease). Protocols for prescribing and stopping these were produced together with patient information leaflets that explained the implications for subsequent stopping of the associated PPI.

A multifaceted approach demonstrates benefits

Of the 862 patients taking part in the review, 18% reduced their PPI dose, and 19% stopped using PPIs altogether. The number of medications prescribed was reduced by 111 items with annualised prescribing savings of £5641 taking into account the cost of acute alginate prescribing. 284 patients had aspirin stopped for primary prevention where risks outweighed benefits, and 110 patients returned questionnaires with overall satisfaction at 79%. Patients said they welcomed a face to face review and would like them to occur more regularly.

Learning points included:

- the baseline audit proved an excellent means of highlighting issues around PPI use and in gaining buy-in from GPs for the review process
- education sessions benefitted from specialist input, validating the need for better review and management in primary care
- piloting the reviews over a four-month period allowed for prompt feedback on how the process was working, and demonstrated benefits at an early stage to encourage continued involvement

Contact: Chris Roberts & Diane McGinn
CCG Practice Pharmacist, Medicines Management Pharmacist
NHS Fylde & Wyre
Email: diane.mcginn@blueyonder.co.uk, christhechemist1@gmail.com
Telephone: 07904 865070