Medicines Optimisation Briefing

This medicines optimisation briefing focuses on patients with cardiovascular disease and is designed for pharmacy professionals in any sector to use in their practice.

Patient experience
My doctor says I’ve got heart disease, but to be honest I feel fine. I’ve been given a huge list of medicines which I’m not keen on taking, as they only seem to make me feel worse. If years of eating the wrong things have caused problems for me, what’s the point in eating the right things now? Surely the tablets would stop me getting worse?

Steps you can take:
- Discuss long term risks with patients and help empower them to make choices on therapy that reduces the risk
- Avoid dictating what therapy a patient must take; ask them what a good outcome for them is. Use the opportunity to talk about lifestyle changes.

Evidence – is the medicine appropriate?
Cardiovascular disease covers many conditions and it can be hard to explain risk to patients in terms that they understand. It is important though that all health professionals are consistent in the advice that they offer and the messages that they give. If you aren’t sure why a patient is on a particular therapy, then ask them. Remember to use the patient as an evidence source.

Steps you can take:
- Ask patients why they think they are on their medicines and how and when they think they should take them
- Ask patients how the medication is making them feel. Are they aware whether it is working or giving them side effects?
- Discuss options
- Find out what other professionals have said and offer support to their messages.

Safe and effective
It’s important to help patients understand their therapy and the purpose of their different medicines. Monitoring may be restricted to infrequent blood pressure checks, which patients may choose to ignore if they feel that they were stressed at the time. Take side effects seriously as these prove a real barrier to patients choosing to take their medicine.

Steps you can take:
- Explain the place in therapy of the different medicines groups, why more than one drug may be necessary and what they may expect to come next. Keep it simple.

Medicines Optimisation as part of routine practice
People with cardiovascular disease are likely to be long term users of your service and this offers you a good opportunity to support the effective management of their disease.

Steps you can take:
- Use the information you’ve got to build up a picture on patient adherence — do patients order their repeat medicines too often, or too infrequently? Do they have unused medicines at home or do they frequently bring medicines to you for safe destruction?
- Use NMS and MUR opportunities to engage people in making the right choices about the management of their condition; build on this with each repeat prescription.


The four principles of medicines optimisation* describe how healthcare professionals can enable patients to improve their quality of life and outcomes from medicines use by having a sustained focus on the need to optimise patients’ medicines.
**Lifestyle messages**
- A healthy diet, regular exercise, weight loss and smoking cessation are key
- Advise patients on the benefits of healthy eating and weight loss – in particular to avoid excess salt and sugar (1kg weight loss = 1 mmHg systolic improvement)
- Encourage patients to stay active
- Offer brief alcohol advice
- Offer smoking cessation advice
- Advise patients to stand up slowly to avoid getting dizzy
- Recommend one-off pneumococcal vaccination and annual flu vaccination.

**Where's the Evidence?**
- NICE http://www.nice.org.uk/
- British Hypertension Society http://www.bhsoc.org/
- Local formularies and experts

**Signposting patients**
- British Heart Foundation http://www.bhf.org.uk/
- Heart UK http://heartuk.org.uk/
- British Hypertension society http://www.bhsoc.org/
- Rehab club (if appropriate)
- Local support groups
- Local sports and leisure centres/Activity groups
- NHS Choices http://www.nhs.uk/
- Stop smoking services. Smoke free NHS https://www.nhs.uk/stop-smoking/
- Alcoholics Anonymous http://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk/

**Where can I learn more about this?**
CPPE learning programmes [www.cppe.ac.uk](http://www.cppe.ac.uk)
The Royal Pharmaceutical Society [www.rpharms.com](http://www.rpharms.com)
Clinical knowledge summaries [http://cks.nice.org.uk](http://cks.nice.org.uk)