

DEVELOPING THE ROLE OF PRIMARY CARE CLINICAL PHARMACIST



AUTHORS: Koskenkorva Tiina, Specialist in Pharmacy (M.Sc.Pharm), University of Helsinki; Linden-Lahti Carita, (M.Sc.Pharm.), HUS Pharmacy; Lotta Schepel, Specialist in Hospital Pharmacy, PhD(Pharm), HUS Pharmacy; Ercan Celikkayalar, Clinical instructor, PhD (Pharm), University of Helsinki; Kirsi Kvarnström, PhD(Pharm.), HUS Pharmacy, Helsinki, Finland kirsi.kvarnstrom@hus.fi

Background

Primary healthcare has an essential role in promoting the rational use of medicines. Finnish health and social services reform aim to strengthen primary healthcare services and prevent diseases with multi-professional teamwork¹. Pharmacists should be involved in the development of the medication management and use process in primary care².

Purpose

The aim was to identify risk factors in the medication management and use process in primary care to target and prioritize a clinical pharmacist's work tasks which could improve medication safety.

Materials and methods

This study was conducted in public health centers in Espoo, Southern Finland. First, a medication safety audit tool for primary healthcare was developed based on the audit tool for hospitals³. Second, medication safety audits were conducted at four public health centers. In the medication safety audits, the medication safety plan of the unit and the medication management process was observed, and the renewal process of electronic prescribing was evaluated. Based on the audit results, a proposal was made on the key improvement areas of the medication management process and the most important work tasks of the clinical pharmacist.

Results

Improving medication safety was identified as the clinical pharmacist's core task in primary care health centers and it was divided into four key areas (Figure 1). The key medication safety areas that needed improvement in the medication management process were identified based on the medication safety audits (Table 1). Furthermore, the need for up-to-date medicines information when renewing electronic prescriptions was identified, as most prescriptions are renewed outside physicians' appointments without patient contact.

Conclusions

With medication safety audits, it was possible to identify the medication safety risks in the medication management process and recognize clinical pharmacists' work tasks that improve medication safety in the primary healthcare setting. The identified development areas and medication safety work suit for the role of primary care clinical pharmacist.

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Keywords Medication safety, clinical pharmacist, medication safety audit, primary care

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Figure 1. The Clinical pharmacist work tasks are formed based on the results of medication safety audits in health centers in Espoo.

Table 1. The key development areas in Espoo health centres in Finland based on medication safety audits.

THE KEY MEDICATION SAFETY DEVELOPMENT AREAS IN PRIMARY CARE HEALTH CENTRES
1. Updating and implementing the unit-based medication safety plans
2. Standardizing the medication reconciliation protocol and process
3. Documenting and utilizing the patient's pharmacotherapy plan
4. Standardizing the protocol for managing drug allergies
5. Improving medication safety in emergency care services
6. Developing the electronic prescription renewal process: need for up-to-date medication information and optimizing the patient's entire medication list

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