



MURs: increasing quality and quantity

According to research published this week (p218), further action is needed to support and embed the medicines use review (MUR) service.

Dawn Connelly looks at how some pharmacists are already increasing the quality and number of MURs performed

Research published this week shows that uptake of medicines use reviews in the first year of the new community pharmacy contract was slow (p218). However, there are more recent signs of growth in the number of contractors claiming payment for MURs and the number of MURs performed in each pharmacy (*PJ*, 17 February, p180). Several initiatives around the country aim to support delivery of this advanced service.

Mike Holden, chief officer of Hampshire and Isle of Wight Local Pharmaceutical Committee, explains that the LPC has had a proactive MUR strategy since the new contract was implemented. The most recent phase of the strategy includes a newsletter, focused entirely on the MUR service, which was launched in January. The newsletter will be published monthly and contains links to MUR resources, updated data on MUR activity within the LPC, details of planned public relations activities and workshops, and a section for readers to share ideas and best practice.

The LPC has also commissioned two pharmacists to offer part-time support to pharmacies who want to develop their MUR service. The pharmacists started work last month and will provide direct support via local pharmacy group workshops, small group sessions and one-to-one coaching. A survey conducted by the LPC in January highlighted three main problem areas where support is needed: promoting the service to patients, both within the pharmacy and more widely, engaging and integrating with GP patient care and involving the whole pharmacy team.

The LPC has also produced a number of MUR resources, which are available on its website (www.hampshirelpc.org.uk). These include documents to help pharmacists brief GPs and market their service to patients, tips on how to plan time for MURs and how to recruit patients, as well as posters, leaflets and support packs.

Mr Holden says that the LPC's latest MUR activity data show that the strategy has been successful. "Back in April 2006, only 54 per cent of pharmacies across Hampshire and Isle of Wight were performing MURs. By

November, this number had risen to 73 per cent," he explains. The number of MURs performed per pharmacy per month also increased over this time, from five to 10. "Although the number per active pharmacy is still below the national average we have got more [pharmacists] doing it. We concentrated on getting more people on board rather than on the numbers because the numbers game is relatively easy. It is getting the mindset right to deliver MURs in the first place that is the hard bit, as well as getting the engagement with GPs and the team involvement," he argues.

Mentoring scheme

Within Surrey PCT, an MUR mentoring scheme for community pharmacists aims to help improve pharmacists' confidence in performing MURs, increase patients' enthusiasm to attend, increase GPs' confidence in the value of MURs, increase the number of MURs conducted, and support and encourage communication between pharmacists and other health care professionals, particularly GPs.

There are currently over 20 pharmacists undertaking the scheme, each of whom is assigned a PCT pharmacist who acts as their mentor. The programme includes an accompanied visit to a GP surgery and ongoing telephone support.

"The key issue is that the mentoring has improved the confidence of pharmacists to do MURs and also the quality (via qualitative feedback from GPs)," explains Fiona Harris, locality chief pharmacist and associate director of public health at Surrey PCT. "We ran a pilot in one practice where the MURs are done before the medication review by the GP, which has received positive feedback from the practice." However, she warns that, to take MURs forward, the profession needs to get the support not only from the medical and nursing professions but also from patients. "They are often not sure what is the purpose of an MUR," she says.

Practical resource

Devon LPC, in conjunction with Hampshire and Isle of Wight LPC, is currently developing a practical MUR resource that will focus on 16 therapeutic areas. The idea came about following several successful disease-based MUR workshops held throughout Devon. Emma Mortimer, who is working on the new MUR resource as a project pharmacist for Devon LPC, explains that one A4 page will be dedicated to each therapeutic area in the form of a crib sheet. It will incorporate triggers for an MUR, concordance hints and advice on conducting MURs as well as signposting information. The resource is expected to be ready by the end of next month.



Mouse mat sent to all pharmacists and GPs in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight

Ms Mortimer also works as a community pharmacist in a busy health centre pharmacy and currently conducts about eight MURs a week. "This gives me a realistic target of reaching the 400 and also means that I am not bombarding GPs with the dreaded MUR paperwork." She relies on a second pharmacist to cover for two days a week.

Ms Mortimer admits that, at first, she found the paperwork a barrier to successful implementation. "I think this is also a barrier for GPs and tends to give them a more negative view of the service," she says. She now has an agreement with her local surgeries that she only sends the action plan, which she clearly marks to show whether it is for information only or whether action is required by the GP. "This has been favoured by the GPs and from the feedback I have had, they are following actions much more readily now." She is looking forward to using the new MUR form when it becomes available (see Panel below).

Recruiting patients was also an issue but initial problems have been resolved by getting all staff involved in the process. "Once staff were confident about the service, what they needed to say and which patients to ask, it turns out that they are much better at recruiting than I am," she admits.

"It has taken a while but I feel like MURs are starting to become an established service, and it can be possible in a busy pharmacy. I am looking forward to inviting back all my MUR patients in 12 months," she says.

Promoting MURs in the media

Last month the Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee ran media training seminars in Preston and London on how to promote MURs. The courses were attended by 30 LPC members, who gained an understanding of how the media works, what makes the news and how they can raise the profile of pharmacy services with the local media, GPs, PCTs and the public.

MUR form consultation

The Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee is currently seeking pharmacists' views on a modified MUR form (*PJ*, 27 January, p97), which has been reduced to two A4 pages. The deadline for comments is 28 February.