

New patient safety toolkit to help GPs avoid errors

8 July 2016, by Emma Rayner



A new online toolkit spearheaded by primary care experts at The University of Nottingham is helping GPs identify and tackle patient safety problems in their surgeries.

The Patient Safety Toolkit has been developed by [primary care](#) researchers at the NIHR School for Primary Care Research, led by Professor Tony Avery at The University of Nottingham's School of Medicine. The toolkit was a finalist at this week's Patient Safety Awards run by the Health Service Journal and the Nursing Times.

The Toolkit is a freely available online resource that is a one-stop shop for GPs across the UK to help address many aspects of patient safety including prescribing and diagnostics, communication and organisational culture as well as patient-reported problems. The resource offers access to a suite of tools to help guide the work of GPs including safe prescribing of medicines, an audit tool for adverse events and patient and practice staff safety questionnaires.

Rare but real risks to patients

Errors in general practice in the UK are rare but do occur in around two to three per cent of consultations, with around one in 10 of these resulting in harm that has a substantial impact on patients' well-being. Compared with hospital care,

little attention has been paid to [patient safety](#) in primary care where there are 340 million GP consultations every year, and one billion medications are dispensed.

Professor Avery said: "There has been a wrong perception in healthcare that primary care is a low risk area for patients. Our new Toolkit plugs this gap by identifying a wide range of safety problems so that GPs can better protect patients. We know that large numbers of general practices throughout the UK are already using the Patient Safety Toolkit so it is already having a positive effect as a check and balance method for the service."

Roadtesting the risk toolkit

The nine tools that make up the Patient Safety Toolkit were individually tested by 46 GP practices in Nottingham, Birmingham, Manchester, Southampton and Staffordshire. They were analysed for their reliability, effectiveness and relevance to UK general practice before being included as fully road-tested in the Toolkit.

One of the GPs who tested the [toolkit](#) said: "It's a very good idea. Sometimes we just focus on coming to work, seeing patients, attending to their complaints, sorting them out but I think it's good to just have a tool that will help you to kind of reflect on your practice, and gauge whether what you're doing is up to standard."

Patient Safety Award judges, Alastair McLellan, Editor of the HSJ and Jenni Middleton, Editor of Nursing Times, said: "We'd like to congratulate all winners and finalists in the Patient Safety Awards 2016. This year the awards really highlight those organisations who are not only doing their day jobs, but going above and beyond every day to deliver exceptional patient care and safety."

Provided by University of Nottingham

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