Tackling SABA over-reliance using the Scottish Therapeutics Utility

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Background

Over-reliance of short-acting beta-agonists (SABA) often indicates poor asthma control¹ and is a predictor for future risk of asthma attack and death.²

The Scottish Therapeutics Utility (STU) tool uses data from GP health records to provide practice-level reports on repeat and high-risk prescribing. STU is installed across Lothian, yet not every practice used it.

Aim

To improve primary care prescribing of SABA in NHS Lothian (Scotland), by improving awareness of STU data.

Methods

A training event raised awareness of STU. Practices were incentivised to analyse their data and review patients’ over-ordering SABA’s. We analysed SABA prescribing data extracted from STU before (June 2019) and after the intervention (May 2021).

Results

Before the intervention, >12 SABA were prescribed to an median of 42 patients per practice (IQR 38). Since the intervention, the number of individuals receiving >12 SABA decreased with a median of 28 per practice (IQR 37).

Lessons learned

Although STU data was available prior to the intervention, few practices were aware of the benefits.

Following the intervention, a reduction in the number of individuals who were prescribed >12 SABA per year which was seen across all areas of the health board.

Messages for other

• Using primary care data to educate practices contributed to a reduction in SABA over-prescribing in NHS Lothian
• Prescribing data was available to primary care staff but had not led to a change. Therefore, to see change it was necessary to raise awareness of the prescribing data directly with users

References: