

Case study name: Transfer of medicines

Start and end dates of work covered by case study: 1 April 2014 - present

Overview summary

The Green Bag scheme has been in place across the West Midlands for a number of years but has been used sporadically and in a disjointed fashion. The WMAHSN saw an opportunity to reinvigorate the programme in order to achieve the benefits that have been realised in areas that have systematically implemented the scheme. Launched region-wide in April 2016, the programme aims to implement a process that can facilitate the safe transfer of medicines at both the interface and handover of care with a region-wide Your Green Bag scheme for patients' own medicines. The process will support the medicines reconciliation process to reduce medication-prescribing errors, re-use and recycle the patients' own medicines.

Challenge identified and actions taken

The challenge was to reinvigorate the scheme and implement a process that can facilitate the safe transfer of medicines at both the interface and handover of care, supporting the medicines reconciliation process to reduce medication-prescribing errors. It was decided to re-launch the standardised "Green Bag", for patients' own medicines, across the region. The aims were to reduce patient confusion with medication post-discharge and the time spent waiting for discharge medication, while increasing patient involvement with their medication and time for patient care. It also aimed to reduce inappropriate prescribing, errors in prescribing, omitted and delayed doses and medicines waste and the time spent on drugs administration.

Impacts / outcomes

- **WMAHSN funded a full literature review of the research in order to ascertain the benefits of the Green Bag scheme and to provide the necessary evidence to justify a region wide reinvigoration of the scheme and to get stakeholder support to do this.**
- **The WMAHSN provided the resources to support a Service Improvement Practitioner to:**
 - **Process map Accident and Emergency and the Clinical Decision Unit at University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust (UHB)**
 - **Process map the transfer of patient medications with West Midlands Ambulance Service**
 - **Survey Chief Pharmacists in the West Midlands on the use of green bags and patients' own medicines within their trust in February 2015**
- **A successful stakeholder event was held in April 2015, which was well attended with multi-disciplinary representation from across the West Midlands region. There was good participation and positive engagement, with sharing of ideas and experiences, potential barriers and resources**

- A baseline audit was completed in June/July 2015, covering pre-implementation of a regional Green Bag scheme across five hospitals in the West Midlands to determine current level of Green Bags and patients' own medicines brought into emergency departments
- Development of resources for the regional West Midlands Your Green Medicine Bag scheme has been completed. Heart of England NHS Foundation Trust designed and developed the Green Bag in collaboration with Pfizer, which has been adapted for the West Midlands wide My Green Medicine Bag scheme
- The regional Your Green Medicine Bags have been manufactured and resources printed.

Supporting quote for stakeholder / programme lead

Quotes taken from the stakeholder event in April 2015:

“It is easier to implement a regional Green Bag because it helps standardisation with regards to the communication.”

“A regional Green Bag, with a consistent approach to using them and with consistent logistics and supply, will help reduce variation.”

“Patients are asked a lot about their medications and they can get confused and need to verify their own information by using a Green Bag or another source.”

“Other trusts have shown that the ‘Green Bag’ worked well and shows the flow of patients’ own medicines. The scheme helped with regards to safety, cost and improves the care that is given.”

Equality and diversity aspects of the project / working in partnership with patients and public

Throughout the programme of work patients have been involved in order to get their views on the benefits of having a Green Bag for medicines and the interactions have always been insightful and helped to scope the project.

Plans for the future

- The regional Your Green Medicine Bags scheme was launched in April 2016
- An interim audit is planned for three months after implementation in July 2016
- The process will then be reviewed and amendments made as necessary.

Tips for adoption

- Distribution of bags - West Midlands Ambulance Service plays an important role with transporting patients own medicines to the provider of care but it is also acknowledged that hospital staff should also give out ‘Green Bags’ within pre-admission screening, pre-op clinics and A&E
- Education – It is important to educate both the patients and staff about the importance of the ‘Green Bag’ using many methods including advertising, awareness campaigns but also at Trust inductions.

- **Evidence-based - producing studies where organisations have benefited from using a 'Green Bag' can help with the engagement with stakeholders and also generate interest in the scheme.**
- **Policies and procedures - Standard operating procedures and guidelines should be produced for the healthcare professionals on how to use and transport the Green Bag between different organisations and wards. The importance of implementing a cohesive process where all health care staff from different organisations understand their role in transferring patients' medicines is essential to increase the clarity between different organisations and the role that they play in the scheme as well as reducing errors.**

Contact for further information

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**Optional sections to include if relevant for this case study.*