Introduction

NICE provide evidence-based guidance for the prescription of medication used to treat school-aged children diagnosed with severe ADHD. An audit undertaken locally in 2014 evidenced that prescribing standards were not consistently recorded in the patient’s notes. As part of changes to practice, an ADHD Prescribing Proforma was introduced throughout the department to improve the quality and clarity of prescribing documentation and thus enhance patient safety.

Method

Hospital coding was used to identify children commencing ADHD medication in 2016 at Poole Hospital. Retrospective analysis of medical notes was carried out to review documentation of the medication prescriptions. NICE CG72 was used as the gold standard with a period of ‘within 3 months’ used for the observations taken prior to medication commencing.

Results

48 cases were identified with 10 excluded as unable to obtain notes. Demographics: Male 87%; Female 13%. Following an in-depth analysis of medical notes and clinic letters, the results were not dissimilar to the 2014 audit findings. Whilst highlighting many positives in prescribing practice (Fig. 1), other standards of pre-prescription documentation remained poor (Fig. 2-5). In addition, the prescribing proforma was not in regular use with only 8% of case notes containing a copy.

Conclusion & Changes to Practice

Similar to 2014 audit data, documentation in ADHD prescribing remained substandard and did not meet the gold standards of NICE CG72. The study was however limited by an awareness that written documentation may not fully reflect true clinical practice and that the interpretation of qualitative data is, to an extent, subjective.

Through presenting the data & talking to clinicians, it became apparent that some were not aware of the prescribing proforma or did not have access to it. Others were resistant to using something that was felt to be time-consuming or dictatorial to their practice after years of experience.

Subsequently, an abbreviated ‘prescribing checklist’ has been created in conjunction with prescribers (Fig. 6), focussing on the weaker areas of documentation. It aims to be more user friendly whilst still prompting the prescriber to meet prescribing gold standards and improve prescription safety.

References

1. Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder: Diagnosis & Management (CG 72)
2. ADHD Audit (2016), Poole NHS Foundation Trust