

# Improving Analgesia Prescribing at The Great Western Hospital, Swindon.

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## Introduction

Appropriate analgesia prescribing is fundamental to a patients journey, affecting length of stay and patient experience.<sup>1</sup> Opioid prescribing has common adverse effects for the patient including constipation and nausea.<sup>2</sup> Laminated prompts are already used throughout the trust to aid doctors prescribing choices for example for antibiotics guidelines and there is good evidence to support its use.<sup>3</sup>

**Aims**

To improve the quality and safety of analgesia prescribing at The Great Western Hospital (GWH), Swindon. by producing and distributing laminated guideline prompt cards to prescribing doctors.

A time scale of three months was set.

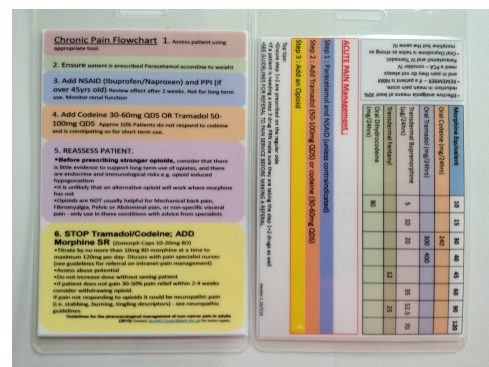
Three main points of focus.

- 1.To increase doctors accuracy and knowledge when converting opioids to it's morphine equivalent.
- 2.To increase rates of concurrent laxative prescribing.
- 3.To encourage the use of codeine as first line weak opioid following new controlled drug classification of tramadol.

## Methodology

A baseline survey using surveymonkey was carried out to gather information concerning doctors prescribing habits and current ability to convert opioids to it's morphine equivalent.

Laminated pain management guideline prompt cards were distributed to F1, F2 and acute medicine doctors at sign in for weekly teaching.



Doctor interviews were carried out to see if they were in possession of a prompt card and a simple opioid conversion question was asked. If they did not have a prompt card at the time of interview they were issued with one after answering the conversion question.

Concurrent prescribing data of laxatives alongside opioids was collected from the electronic prescribing record of patients on the acute medical unit. Posters were displayed in doctors offices and drug rooms. Laxative prescribing rates were then recollected. This was then compared with the doctor survey responses.



**Results**

Survey - 29 responses. 8 F1s, 8 F2s, 7 CT1+, 6 other.

25% had accessed the trust pain management guidelines. 4 doctors already had a laminated prompt card.

93% said they we moderately confident to extremely confident when prescribing analgesia.

Opioid conversion question - 86% error with only 4 doctors answering correctly (those with a card).

Error rates when converting opioids fell as prompt prevalence increased until there was 100% prevalence and 0% error.

83% of doctors who responded said that they prescribing laxatives alongside opioids frequently (57%) or almost all the time (25%)

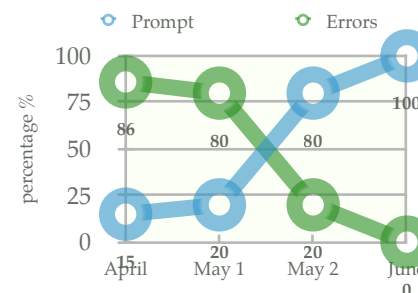
When actual rates of concurrent prescribing were sampled on the acute medical unit, only 14% of patients were prescribing a laxative alongside their opioid. This increased to 50% after posters were displayed around the acute medical unit.

## Discussion

Distribution of laminated prompts by doctors increased accuracy of opioid conversion by 86%. Concurrent prescribing of laxatives alongside opioids increased by 36%.

A key issue that was recognised during this project was the need for longevity in changing the prescribing behaviours of doctors. Taking advantage of the new e-prescribing system a prescribing protocol is currently under construction. When prescribing codeine, morphine, tramadol and oxycodone a laxative will automatically also be added. The prescriber will need to consciously opt out if not required. Laminated prompt cards are now incorporated in the new doctors induction packs.

*With special thanks to The GWH pain team and The Acute Medical Unit staff.*



## References

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