

NIHR Greater Manchester PSTRC

Plain English Publication Summary

Publication: [The evaluation of an e-learning prescribing course for general practice](#)

Publication details (Vancouver format)

Salema NE, Clement N, Hysenagolli R, Hibberd R, Bell BG, Gookey G, Avery A, Knox R. The evaluation of an e-learning prescribing course for general practice. *Education for Primary Care*. 2021 Apr 4:1-7.

What are the most important findings/conclusions in this paper? Why are they important?

The majority of people who took part in a survey about the Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP) e-learning module 'Safer Prescribing in General Practice' reported that the course had a positive impact on their prescribing knowledge, skills and attitudes. Medication reviews was the top area where a change in prescribing practice was reported. Over 90% of the people who responded agreed that the e-learning course was easy to use and a useful part of their continuing professional education.

This study shows that clinicians recognise the need for training in prescribing, but the lack of training is one of the factors that can lead to errors. This suggests that more education is needed, not just for GPs in training, but for qualified GPs as well.

What did you do?

This paper describes the development of an e-learning course and the evaluation that took place afterwards with users of the course. The aim was to make the e-learning course as effective as possible for prescribing. The course was developed by GPs and pharmacists and focussed on:

- the main aspects that make up good prescribing
- examining the common reasons for prescribing errors

Why did you conduct this research?

Prescribed medication may lead to significant illness or death by causing negative health events, or because of a prescribing error. E-learning is a common tool used to support training in prescribing. This paper describes the development of an e-learning course and the results of the survey that users completed afterwards, which aimed to make sure the e-learning course was effective.

What was known before your paper was published?

E-learning is a common tool used to support postgraduate (and some undergraduate) training in prescribing. Many advantages of e-learning have previously been described including:

- easy access
- teacher accountability
- cost-effectiveness
- less administrative burden.

Another advantage is that learners are able to choose the content, order, pace, location and timing of the course. The content of the course can be updated and amended at any time.

The e-learning course is the first of its kind to address prescribing in primary care.

What is next? What is the potential impact of the work in this paper? What will change as a result of this paper (or the study it describes)?

Prescribing medication is the most frequent activity in primary care, and therefore, getting it right is very important. This study shows that prescribers recognise the need for training in prescribing and the responses to the survey show that e-learning is a good way to provide this education.

Although training can help medical students feel more confident about their prescribing, we don't know whether training will reduce errors in the long-term. But, we do know that to reduce prescribing errors, we need to use a variety of methods, including ongoing training and skills testing.

Does this paper link in to a particular study / project? If so, please summarise the study and explain how this paper has improved understanding, or will move the study forward.

This e-learning course was developed to reduce prescribing errors in primary care in the UK following the important PRACTiCe (PRevalence And Causes of prescribing errors in general practiCe) study of 2012, which identified that 1 in 20 of all prescription items contained an error.

The PRACTiCe study showed that providing clear and complete dose instructions and medication monitoring were areas that needed improvement. Users of the e-learning module thought their prescribing habits had changed in both of these areas as a result of the course, showing that the e-learning course does address key problems in primary care.

Also, in the e-learning course, effective medication reviews were identified as the most important aspect of prescribing to improve, which agrees with findings of the PRACTiCe study.