Home medication review

A personal experience in rural Tasmania

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Ouse is a small rural town in the Central Highlands of Tasmania 90 km northwest of Hobart. It is a town of 300 people with a surrounding rural population yielding a practice population of 1500. I work as a solo practitioner, also dispensing medications at the Ouse General Practice in the district’s community hospital. Forming a good team in a rural area where resources are less than adequate is quite challenging.

Medicines are a part of everyday life; general practitioners, however, are often unaware of all the medications their patients are actually taking. Understanding patients’ conditions and the medications they take to manage these conditions is important for effective treatment; but in a busy practice it is inordinately time consuming.

At first I felt – like most GPs – that I might not have sufficient time to perform a HMR, which included explaining each medication in detail and answering patients’ questions about treatment. Understanding patients’ conditions and the medications they take to manage these conditions is important for effective treatment; but in a busy practice it is inordinately time consuming.

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Following their HMRs, patients expressed their views in different ways. Many were impressed and excited with the service, others were less positive. These differences could be attributed to varying degrees of knowledge about both their disease and contingent medication as well as their level of education.

Part of the value of the HMR is that patients appear more confident in seeking further advice from their GP on dosage, possible side effects and in discussing the use of new medications or over-the-counter medicines.

The HMR gives us a valuable peek inside our patients’ bathroom cabinets. It empowers the patient and encourages them to take responsibility for their medicine and their health by feeling comfortable enough to ask about anything of which they are unsure. Although time consuming, HMRs are worth the effort because they give patients satisfaction through a better doctor-patient relationship. Is this not what we all want?

Conflicts of interest: none declared.