2015 EAHP survey: managers urged to support systems to reduce medication errors

Richard Price

The latest results from European Association of Hospital Pharmacists (EAHP) annual survey of hospital pharmacy practice [are now available](#). A headline result from the almost 1000 responses from 33 countries is a perceived lack of support from hospital managers for the implementation of computerised decision support systems to reduce the risk of medication errors.

'Computerised decision support systems' refers to hospital wide software applications with prescribing support software and other functionalities designed to tackle common causes of error. Such systems reduce risk by eliminating hand written transcriptions, providing semi-automated error-checking possibilities, drug dose recommendations, and alerts for serious drug-drug reactions. They can also be linked to life saving systems such as bedside scanning of medicines to reduce administration error, specialised hospital pharmacy softwares to support pharmacy preparations and compounding, and more.

The latest findings emerged as part of a report into the extent to which the 44 [European Statements of Hospital Pharmacy](#) are being met in practice. Among the statements the October–December 2015 survey focused on was Statement 5.5 'Hospital pharmacists should help to decrease the risk of medication errors by disseminating evidence-based approaches to error reduction including computerised decision support'. This topic emerged as one of the most challenging of the 23 Statements surveyed. Implementation of computerised support goes beyond the scope of what hospital pharmacies can achieve alone. Instead, a whole system project management approach is required, including prescribers (typically doctors), pharmacists and the administrators of medicines in hospital (typically nurses), as well as health system managers and budget planners, at local, national and regional levels.

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Responding to the results, EAHP President Joan Peppard remarked:

"These survey results provide clear information about hospital pharmacy development and where activity must be focused in order to achieve implementation of the European Statements. It is clear much work remains to convince those with responsibility for hospital management of the safety benefit and other returns available from computerised decision support systems. When it comes to leveraging technology for patient safety, progress does not happen by itself. Hospital pharmacists, with support from fellow healthcare professionals and patients, must advocate for better. Knowing that technologies for reducing medication error exist, and that the evidence of their benefit is out there, the ethics of our profession demands our action".

Tony West, Statement Implementation Project Director, commented:

"It is clear from early reflections on statement implementation across Europe that hospital pharmacies face similar difficulties in securing new technology take up. Computerised decision support systems to prevent medication error are just one example. Keele University's report advises sharing business cases where success has been achieved, as well as strategies for winning hearts and minds of other clinicians and managers. EAHP's statement implementation team are already taking up these recommendations."

CALLING ALL HOSPITAL PHARMACIES —JOIN THE EAHP-EPSA INTERNSHIP PLATFORM!

The EAHP has launched a recruitment call to hospital pharmacies across Europe encouraging them to sign up to the [EAHP-European Pharmaceutical Students' Association \(EPSA\) Internship Platform](#). The platform enables hospital pharmacies to offer students and young pharmacists from other European countries the opportunity of gaining cross-border practice experience.

The platform is a unique collaboration between EAHP and the [EPSA](#). Operating for three years, both organisations are

now enthusiastic to see its reach expanded through the recruitment of more hospitals to [the platform](#).

Through the platform, students and young pharmacists can take up periods of internship from a current choice of 19 hospital pharmacies in seven countries. The platform has proved sufficiently popular with applicants that a need has been identified to grow the number of pharmacy sites offering placements.

Any hospital pharmacy located in one of the member states of the Council of Europe may get involved via the completion of a short application form [available on the EAHP website](#).

Encouraging hospital pharmacies to sign up, Aida Batista, EAHP Director of Professional Development, and chief student liaison, said:

"Providing students and young pharmacists with placement opportunities in hospital pharmacy doesn't just benefit the intern. The hospital benefits too from the enthusiasm and exchange of international practice experience brought from the participant. The [positive feedback we receive](#) from participating hospital pharmacies gives us great confidence to recommend other hospitals get involved. Providing this kind of opportunity to young people is most of all, a wise investment in the future of our profession."

Supporting the call, Katarzyna Świderek, President of the EPSA said:

"EAHP and EPSA have a shared interest in developing the future of the pharmacy profession in Europe, and in encouraging the spread of practice ideas and innovations across borders. That is why the internship platform collaboration makes so much sense. It is now time to spread the benefits wider. I hope more hospital pharmacies will recognise the opportunities available from providing placements to talented young pharmacists and pharmacists-to-be."

EAHP Statement 6: Education and Research

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