**CASTLE PLACE PHARMACY TOUR 30th OCT 2023**

We met with A who is the Lead Pharmacist at Castle Place, she has been there for 5 years previously holding post at the RD&E.

There are 5 dispensing Pharmacies for Tiverton - Boots, Superdrug, J Hoots (formally Lloyds), Tiverton Pharmacy (at the hospital) and Bampton.

There are 4 ways of requesting a prescription – Post box, through your regular Pharmacy, Accurx or emailing the Practice. The NHS App can also be used but this is not as easy. It takes 5 days to process a prescription to allow for any issues. The request is checked on day one and passed to a doctor the next day for sign off. It then goes to the Dispensing Pharmacy. Most days there can be 130-140 patient requests. If the surgery is open on a Saturday a request can be dealt with that day and passed on. Doctors can sign off up to 400 some days.

Checks for Long Term Conditions, like BP, are indicated in the Patient’s Alert Box on EMIS record and these are taken into account when processing a request.

Electronic automatic repeat prescriptions can be given for 6 months at a time. They are signed off and put on the Spine for the pharmacy to download monthly or two monthly.

Patients need to be pro-active in requesting early and to contact the Practice early if there are any errors. The aim of the Castle Place Practice Pharmacy Team is to support and they want things to be right. Prescriptions cannot always be in sync if new medicines come on or are being revived.

99% of prescriptions are electronically sent. 23% are repeat dispensing. Acute prescriptions are done in a day. Regular in 2 days then to the nominated Pharmacy. Sometimes supply issues will delay. Patients should always check what is in the bag before they leave the Pharmacy. Medications cannot be re-used because there is no guarantee of the condition medicines have been kept in when they leave the Pharmacy, so all have to be destroyed.

With certain new medicines, newly prescribed patients will be contacted to check if all is well either by the Practice Pharmacist or the Community Pharmacist where the medication was collected from. Sometimes supply issues will be problematic and a different supplier will be used for a drug. The Pharmacists have a WhatsApp group to check availability and do so all the time. They can spend 10% of their time sorting out shortages on some medicines. Sometimes a drug from a different supplier will be used for economic reasons but will do the same job.

Castle Place Practice Pharmacy Team check hospital discharge letters for medicines and will follow up with patients. At the moment the Pharmacy Team are reactive to what is in front of them but do want to be more proactive in the future.

They check specialist information on drugs e.g. if you can crush or break tablets if a patient has difficulty especially on slow-release tablets. Some now have a line across the middle so they can be broken in 2 for the same effect.

All prescription requests are scanned onto the patient’s EMIS record to give an audit chain.

Both A and J are able to Prescribe medicines. The Practice also has access to the Community Services Pharmacists who will go out to peoples’ homes and check on how medicines are working. There are training posts, they have one qualified and one in training (H and C) and one Community Pharmacy Technician, V, now at the Practice, who will check on hospital discharge medicines alongside other tasks.

The Pharmacy Team in the Practice has been funded for 4 years. Previously doctors would ring pharmacies for advice, so time has been saved on having an in-house Team.

The patient has a choice of where to collect, they can nominate a pharmacy for regular use and for a one-off request for urgent medicines. Tech side at a Pharmacy might go down but it is not linked to the surgery so no knowledge unless notified. Regular bulk prescriptions usually stay at one pharmacy, but a one-off item could go to the nearest/closest for pick up.

Both A and J can see patients to support optimisation of medicines with individual patients, but it would not be on the same day.

Accurx requests sent in over a weekend would be picked up on a Monday and signed off by a doctor on Tuesday and then sent to the Pharmacy. Boots regular prescriptions are on Hub and Spoke and are dispensed elsewhere and sent to the shop.

Online Pharmacies can take longer if medicines are not available as they have to check back with the Practice for an alternative, so some of the prescription may be picked up at a local pharmacy anyway.

Any new patients to Castle Place Practice will have their medicines on a back screen and will be checked properly.

Thank you to the Castle Place Practice staff who on the day gave us a really good and interesting insight into the behind-the-scenes workings. A has gone over my notes taken on the day so a big thank you to her for taking that extra time. I don’t think many patients will ever realise how involved it is.

Pam Spencer