



## Media release

### **New study shows prescribing errors can be reduced when paramedics increase the frequency of patients bringing their medications to the emergency department**

Bringing patients' regular medications to the emergency department (ED) significantly improves the accuracy of prescribing if the patient is admitted to hospital, previous studies have shown.

This new study has found that an intervention targeting paramedics who bring patients to the ED can increase the frequency with which patients arrive in the ED with their medications.

This study also confirms the fact that having patients own medications available in the ED has a positive impact on hospital medication prescribing.

The study by Ms Esther Chan, formerly clinical pharmacist and currently Honorary Research Fellow in the Department of Emergency Medicine at Austin Health, PhD candidate from the Department of Pharmacy Practice at Monash University; Dr Simone Taylor, senior pharmacist – Emergency Medicine and Research in the Pharmacy Department at Austin Health; Associate Professor Jennifer Marriott, from the Department of Pharmacy Practice at Monash University; and Mr Bill Barger, manager of Clinical Standards and Audit at Ambulance Victoria, is published in the latest issue of *Emergency Medicine Australasia*, the journal of the Australasian College for Emergency Medicine.

The patients were taking more than four medications when they were brought to an ED by ambulance in March 2006 and December 2006, and they were not referred to a pharmacist prior to the admission chart being written.

ED pharmacists determined patients' regular medication from all available sources and details of medications brought in by ambulance.

Medication charts were assessed for discrepancies related to medications taken prior to presentation.

These were recorded as errors if a change was made to the medication chart after discussion with the prescriber.

The multi-faceted intervention aimed to encourage paramedics to bring patients' medications into hospital by increasing their awareness that the physical presence of patient's medications has been found to improve prescribing accuracy.

As a result, the percentage of regular medications incorrectly prescribed significantly decreased from 18.9% (151/800) to 8.75% in the pre- and post- intervention periods, respectively.

Before the intervention, paramedics brought some or all of the patients' medications to the ED in 67.0% of cases compared to 87.0% of cases, post-intervention.

With the improvement in prescribing accuracy evident in this study, the researchers recommend similar intervention amongst ambulance services nationwide.

This message can be extended to patients and their families, who can play an important role in bringing their medications with them to hospital.

FURTHER INFORMATION

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