

MORRISON, C., MACLURE, K., GIBSON SMITH, K., HANNAM, P., DIXON, L., MACRAE, Y., CUNNINGHAM, S. and STEWART, D. 2018. Technology-enabled pharmaceutical care provision to dispensing medical practices in NHS Highland: promoting equality of access to remote populations. Presented at the 78th International Federation of Pharmacists (FIP) world pharmacy and pharmaceutical sciences congress 2018, 2-6 September 2018, Glasgow, UK.

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2018

Technology-enabled pharmaceutical care provision to dispensing medical practices in NHS Highland: Promoting equality of access to remote populations

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BACKGROUND

Equity of access to healthcare is a strategic priority in Scotland.

PURPOSE

To evaluate the NHS Highland technology-enabled delivery of pharmaceutical care.

METHODS

A mixed-methods evaluation followed 3 remotely-based pharmacists who delivered patient medication reviews to 3 GP practices (A,B,C). Patients chose between a telephone or video-link consultation using 'Attend Anywhere' software at the GP Practice or other location. Patient study packs were sent by GP Practice staff or pharmacist. The questionnaire collected data on participants' views and experiences of the pharmacist consultation using Likert scales, open questions and the CARE Measure. Participants were purposively sampled for telephone interview. Ethical approval was gained.

RESULTS

- ➔ Thirty-three took part from practice C (n=23,69.7%), A (n=5,15.2%), B (n=5,15.2%).
- ➔ All consultations were via telephone (n=33,100%).
- ➔ Median age of respondents was 66 years; most were female (n=19,57.6%); and, retired (n=23,69.7%).

Respondents reported that the:

- ➔ pharmacist was 'very good' or 'excellent' at 'making them feel at ease' (n=30,90.9%), 'letting them tell their "story"' (n=28,84.8)
- ➔ would 'recommend consulting a pharmacist to others' (n=20,60.6%)
- ➔ that they 'would prefer to consult a GP' (n=20,60.6%)
- ➔ ten interviews (A, n=3,37.5%; B, n=7,70.0%) were conducted

CONCLUSION

These findings highlight the patient perceived value of providing medication reviews by remotely-based pharmacist which may address issues in accessing medicines-related care from remote areas. However, Scotland's internet infrastructure remains unreliable so the new video-conferencing 'Attend Anywhere' software was not tested.