

Working with the North West Coast NHS Innovation Agency

During the past month I have participated via Zoom in two meetings hosted by the North West Coast NHS Innovation Agency. The first one was for the Patient Safety Ambassadors, of whom I am one, representing our U3A, and the other one was the Patient Participation and Involvement Group which the Patient Safety Ambassadors were invited to join.

The Patient and Public Involvement Group listened to a presentation on The Happy Hearts Website. (www.happy-hearts.co.uk). This website contains a lot of useful information on high blood pressure, cholesterol levels and atrial fibrillation and I am sure many of our members would find it interesting.

In addition, there were presentations by some SMEs (Small and Medium Enterprises) about their technological innovations which they hope to bring to market to help patients in various situations. These presentations were of a similar nature to those we have seen at previous meetings of the Science Group.

The items presented were:

1. A tablet computer already set up to be very easy to use for an elderly person living alone, to enable them to communicate with their family or carers via video link.
2. A mobile phone App which is intended to simplify the transportation of patients to and from hospital appointments or between hospitals. The idea is that waiting times for the transport would be reduced and that the most appropriate form of the transport would be provided. The App would alert the patient when the transport was close to them for the journeys both to and from the hospital.

The Patient Safety Group meeting had two items on the agenda. The first was a discussion about the fact that because of the Coronavirus outbreak, some of the safety work has been put on hold. This work includes the project whereby GP computer systems are 'interrogated' by primary care pharmacists to search for patients whose medication may need a review for various reasons, such as blood tests being due, or patients being prescribed certain medications that may interact and reassurance being needed that the interaction is relatively low risk for that particular patient. Access to care homes has of course been very restricted which has held back supportive work by pharmacists on all medication-related issues within the homes. It is hoped that it will be possible to resume all of this work before too long.

The second item related to a project that had just started in the Knowsley area prior to 'lockdown' but again has had to be paused. This relates to testing for the condition Atrial Fibrillation in community pharmacies. An agreement has been made between the local pharmacies and GP surgeries whereby patients demonstrating any irregularity in the heart rhythm are referred on to their local GP for further investigation and advice. The testing was paused for two reasons, one being that the pharmacists' workload increased dramatically at the beginning of the virus pandemic, and also because of concerns around the cleaning of the device used in between patients and the need to be sure that infection could not be transmitted between patients.

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