Lay summary for *Qualitative analysis of vendor discussions on the procurement of Computerised Physician Order Entry and Clinical Decision Support systems in hospitals.*


Electronic prescribing (ePrescribing) systems may increase the safety, efficiency and quality of healthcare. There are many different types of these systems available and hospitals are responsible for choosing the system that will work best for them. There is a great need to collect knowledge and experience in order to help hospitals to choose a new system and to set it up. The companies that sell these systems, the vendors, have the most experience of setting up ePrescribing systems and could be an important resource for other hospitals, but the vendors’ knowledge is rarely used more widely.

This paper looks at some the challenges of setting up ePrescribing systems from the point of view of the vendors. It also considers how those challenges might be addressed, using insights gained from vendors. We held group discussions with nine participants, who represented six different vendors.

We found that there were currently no guidelines for hospitals which were choosing and setting up an ePrescribing system. Vendors recommended that hospitals should employ people with a lot of experience in that particular hospital to help out with decision making and setting up the new system. Vendors suggested that hospitals often moved too quickly through the process of setting up an ePrescribing system. They recommended that hospitals should begin by setting up a simple system and give the staff time to get used to those changes first. Vendors also mentioned the importance of strong relationships between vendors and hospitals. Good relationships would help hospitals to choose the system that would best meet their needs.

We conclude that vendors of ePrescribing systems can provide important insights to hospitals on how best to choose and set up a system. Guidelines for hospitals are needed to support them through the decision making and setting up phases. These findings may be useful to English hospitals introducing ePrescribing systems as well to healthcare organisations in other countries.