

Lay summary for **What does ePrescribing mean for patients? A case study of the perspectives of hospital renal patients.**

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Electronic prescribing (ePrescribing) in hospitals is expected to improve the quality of patient care. Patients themselves, however, have not had the opportunity to voice their views on ePrescribing systems. Anecdotal evidence suggests that many patients may understand the potential benefits of electronic healthcare systems. For instance, it is thought that patients recognise that ePrescribing could improve information sharing between health professionals and patients. This study looked at the significance of ePrescribing systems to patients.

We interviewed representatives from national patient groups as well as hospital patients in a renal ward where an ePrescribing system was in use. We also spent time on that ward and took notes about what we observed. We organised the information collected in these three ways by keeping a focus on: perceived benefits of ePrescribing; patients' awareness and understanding of their prescribed medications; and patients' views on medications prescribed (or advised) on admission and on discharge from hospital.

We found that patients seemed to view ePrescribing in a positive light overall. However, the ePrescribing system in the site we studied did not seem to have improved patients' involvement in the prescribing process or to have improved medication counselling at discharge. We found ePrescribing systems did not make patients feel they had more information about their medications. Indeed, by removing the paper charts at the end of hospital beds, patients seemed to have less access to information about their medications and care than before. We did not identify technical reasons, to do with the ePrescribing system itself, to explain why patients' involvement in hospital prescribing had not apparently changed for the better.

We conclude that ePrescribing could bring new opportunities for patients and healthcare professionals to improve patient involvement. Having an ePrescribing system is not enough on its own to promote better patient involvement. To achieve that also needs other changes to take place, such as policy changes and changes in healthcare professionals' approach to prescribing for hospital patients.