Safe repeat prescribing systems

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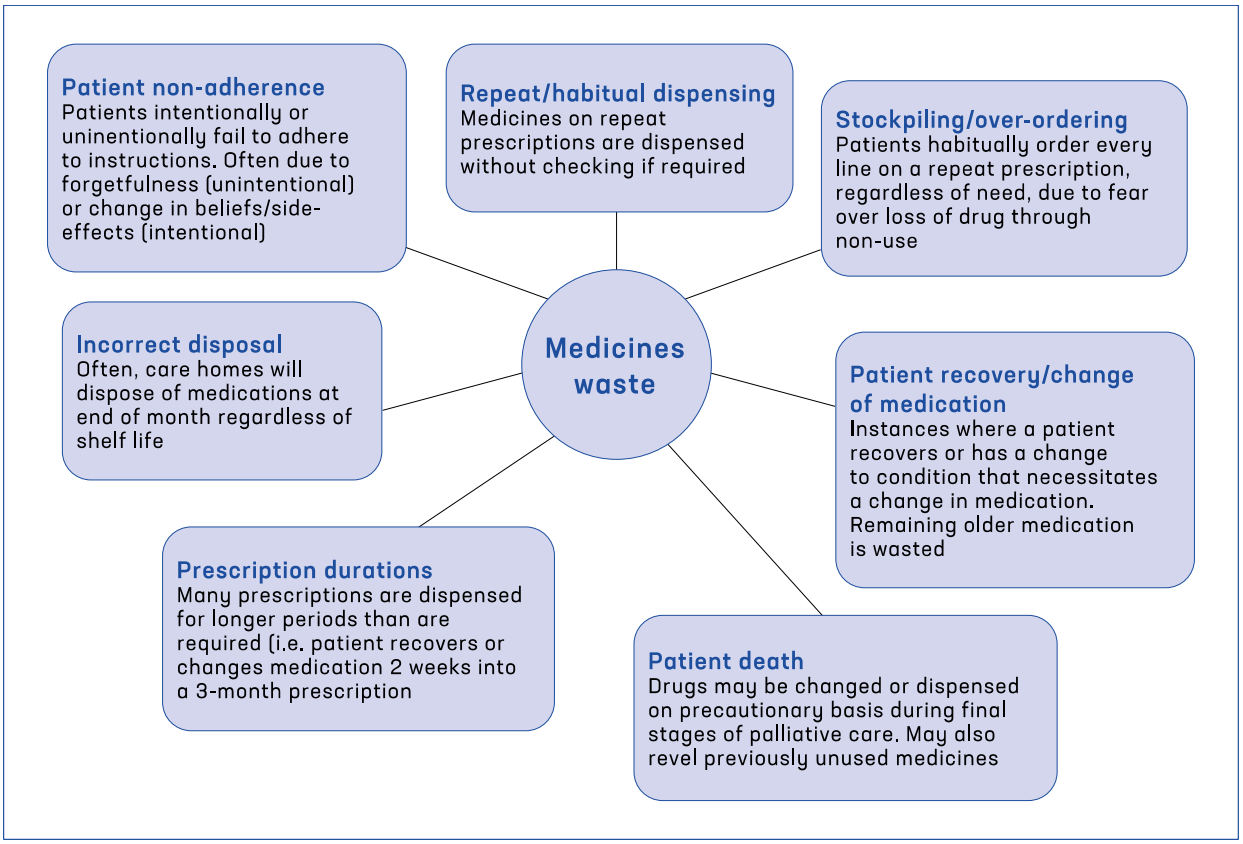
It is estimated that £300 million is wasted on medicines in the UK each year. The causes of waste vary, from inefficient prescribing and stockpiling to patient recovery and non-adherence. Pharmaceutical waste can occur at any stage from the point of prescribing to the taking/not taking of medicines by the patient, and can occur through failures in existing processes or patient behaviours. The prescriber, dispenser and patient all play a part in the creation of waste. Repeat prescribing can contribute to medicine waste in a number of ways (NHS England, 2023):

- Items prescribed/dispensed, but not required by patients
- Items dispensed without being requested by the patient
- Patients over-ordering to create a stockpile of medication (often this applies to 'when required' medication)
- Patient concerns over medicine shortages (having 'plenty of medicines as a stand-by')
- Patient concerns over effects of non-adherence: 'Always ask for everything on the slip ... don't want to run out, easier to say everything, don't want doctor to think I'm not using them properly by not re-ordering'
- In primary care, a review of high-cost drug prescribing can reveal areas of waste, not to mention opportunities to address patient safety issues and improve patient care.



Case scenario								
Drug	**Directions**	**Quantity prescribed**	**Cost for 1-month supply**	**Problem**	**Outcome after review**	**Directions after review**	**Quantity after review**	**Monthly cost saving**
A	One to be taken three times a day	84	£1428	Dose on discharge letter stated 'One to be taken three times a week'	Prescription was reviewed and updated	One to be taken three times a week	12	?
B	One to be taken daily	28	£987	Red traffic light medicine for prescribing only by hospital specialist	Prescribing of the medicine transferred back to specialist	N/A	0	?
C	One to be taken daily	2 x 84	2 x £282	Patient was over-ordering; the prescription was issued twice in the last month	Prescribed quantity was reduced to a 28-day supply	One to be taken daily	28	?

Case scenario

The following scenario shows the prescribing cost of three medicines in general practice over a 1-month period. Work out the monthly cost savings after reviewing each prescription.

NHS England. Pharmaceutical waste reduction in the NHS. 2023. https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/pharmaceutical-waste-reduction.pdf (accessed 30 May 2023)