



Healthcare Commission urges NHS trusts to move faster with e-prescribing

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Abstract Following a review on medicines management by the Healthcare Commission, all acute hospital trusts in England are advised to move forward faster with e-prescribing and the use of robotics to automate hospital pharmacies.

The review rated 18 hospital trusts as 'excellent', the highest rating, 12 as 'weak', the lowest rating, 70 as 'good', and 73 as 'fair'.

The National Patient Safety Agency's National Reporting and Learning System data quoted by the Healthcare Commission, shows that 41,220 (9%) of all incidents reported from the acute sector in England and Wales, were related to medication in the year ending July 2006 and that 95% of these incidents caused no or low harm to the patient.

The review identified indicators that trusts can use to assess their progress on the use of IT but these do not include a specific reference to IT. The indicators cover a range of issues, from the percentage of patients who had had a comprehensive medicines review to whether patients had a complete medicines record for their stay in hospital.

The Healthcare Commission perceive e-prescribing and pharmacy robotics as 'enablers' rather than 'indicators', however, some of the issues raised in the indicators could be addressed by moving forward with e-prescribing.

When e-prescribing is linked to an electronic patient record, interventions such as adding checks on a patient's allergies, could become possible.

Overall, trusts must ensure that e-prescribing does not introduce errors and is used safely.

A national report, detailing all of the findings from the medicines management review will be available later this year.