Information Services Division

Consultation on the publication of prescribing data

NHS National Services Scotland

Publication of Prescribing Data Consultation

Information Services Division (ISD) is carrying out a review of prescribing data and would like to hear the views of stakeholders to inform our proposed changes. We are keen to identify data that is of interest and find ways to continue to improve our publications. This is in line with the UK Statistics Authority Code of Practice for Official Statistics, which encourages user engagement to ensure that publications are of value.

In light of recent improvement in CHI capture from prescriptions dispensed in the community, ISD is now able to provide a range of further analyses. For example analyses that would describe potential health inequalities; data split by different demographics such as age, gender, deprivation as well as by different geographies.

ISD is proposing more frequent publications and wants to take advantage of opportunities to develop 'open data' where information is released more regularly in a range of formats that can be exported from the ISD website and imported for local analysis.

This paper lays out the current landscape of prescribing publications, a number of proposals for change and a stakeholder questionnaire.

Current landscape

ISD currently has data on over one billion prescriptions dispensed in Scotland. These data are gathered from community pharmacies across Scotland, generated as part of prescription processing. They are made available approximately three months after the initial prescription was dispensed. Using these data, information and intelligence is available to customers through publications, spreadsheets, bespoke analysis and online tools.

Prescribing publications

The prescribing publications currently released by ISD are:

- Dispenser Remuneration - Quarterly
- Prescription Cost Analysis – Annual
- Minor Ailments – Annual
- Mental Health – Annual
- Smoking Cessation – Annual
- Antimicrobial Use and Resistance - Annual
- Antimicrobial Primary Care Indicators – Annual

See the full schedule at http://www.isdscotland.org/Health-Topics/Prescribing-and-Medicines/Publication-Schedule/

What ISD are consulting on

1. **Level of data aggregation and frequency of publication**

- At what level should data be made available? The Prescription Cost Analysis publication contains a Scotland total for each prescribed item. This could be presented split by month, geography or dispensing pharmacy.
- ISD regularly receives requests for the number of items dispensed by GP practice at individual drug level under the Freedom of Information Act, and released as bespoke analysis. Would it be useful to publish this routinely?
- How frequently are data needed? Is an annual publication sufficient for more detailed data?

2. **Timeliness and frequency of statistics**

- ISD is proposing to release some prescribing information monthly. The time lag for this release could potentially be reduced to three months from the current six. This monthly release would include Scotland-level summary statistics e.g. total number of items dispensed and Gross Ingredient Cost. This could be split by NHS Board.

- How best should this information be provided? For example would an Excel workbook suffice or would a narrative summary be helpful.

3. **Monthly release of data files**

- ISD is considering releasing a monthly data file (csv format) of dispensed items at a low level of aggregation such as GP practice level. This would not be patient identifiable and would comply with ISD's Protocol for Disclosure Control

  GP Practice level prescribing data at individual drug level is routinely released in England, Wales and Northern Ireland:

  http://www.hscic.gov.uk/gpprescribingdata

  http://www.primarycareservices.wales.nhs.uk/home

  http://www.hscbusiness.hscni.net/services/2471.htm

  Would this development be helpful for Scotland?

4. **Dispenser Remuneration**

- If ISD published information monthly (as described in section 2) this would supersede the information available in the quarterly Dispenser Remuneration publication. It is ISD's recommendation that the quarterly publication is stopped. Would stopping the quarterly publication cause any issues?

- ISD propose a new annual Dispenser Remuneration publication, which would provide detailed analysis on the costs of prescription services and drugs, by individual payment type, by NHS Boards and with population averages for costs and number of items. ISD would expect to publish this in the summer each year.

5. **Prescription Cost Analysis**

- Prescription Cost Analysis publications in all other UK nations include data items that are prescribed in hospital but dispensed in community pharmacies. There is an increasing shift to dispensing in community pharmacies for a variety of drugs that are prescribed in hospitals. ISD is interested to hear views on whether we should continue to include these dispensed items in our PCA publication.

- ISD is also considering whether an annual release of high level data would still remain useful if GP practice level Prescription Cost Analysis data were being released monthly (see section 3). An annual release of summary data may still be valuable to

    - users who do not wish to analyse csv data files;
    - those interested in figures for all items dispensed in the year (as the monthly data file is likely to have exclusions applied to the data in order to address data protection concerns).

6. **Pharmacy Services**

- ISD currently publish information annually by financial year for the Minor Ailments Service. However, this is only one of the services provided by community pharmacies. ISD propose to add other services such as public health services, gluten free foods, and the chronic medication service, to be released in the summer of each year.

- What types of information would be of interest and value? Suggestions include: dispensed costs; volumes of medicines; numbers of patients registered for services; monthly, quarterly and annual trends, demographic characteristics of patients dispensed medicines through these services.

7. **Smoking Cessation**

- ISD currently produces two smoking cessation publications. It is proposed that the content of the prescribing smoking cessation publication is incorporated into the existing NHSScotland Smoking Cessation Service Statistics annual report in the

future.

- ISD are intending to stop releasing the Smoking Cessation prescribing publication in light of this development. The final release of this publication will be in October 2015.

8. **Future publications**

- ISD are considering the possibility of releasing a series of more focused, topic specific reports. This would give an opportunity for the development of new analyses and closer working with stakeholders. Ideas for any specific topics of interest would be welcomed.

Information Services Division

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NHS National Services Scotland

We would like to receive your responses to the following questions regarding the current and proposed prescribing publications:

1: Level of data aggregation and frequency of publication

Please indicate the importance to you and desired frequency of these organisational breakdowns

	Not relevant	Relevant	Relevant monthly	Relevant quarterly	Relevant annually
Data at Scotland level					
Data at NHS Board level					
Data at Locality level e.g. Integrated Health Care Partnership or similar					
Data at prescribing contractor level					
Data at dispensing contractor level					
Comments:					

2: Proposed Monthly Summary Statistics

ISD are proposing to release high level summary statistics on a monthly basis

How frequently should summary data be released e.g. monthly, quarterly	
What data items should be included in a summary statistics publication	
What level should data be presented at in a summary publication e.g. Scotland level, NHS Board level	
Comments:	

3: Proposed Monthly Release of Data File

ISD is considering the routine monthly release of a data file (csv format) containing data on dispensed items at a low level of aggregation (e.g. GP practice level).

What organisational breakdowns should be included in this file e.g. GP practice	
It is proposed that this data file should reflect the PCA publication. Are there other data items that you would you like to see included?	
Is there any data that you believe should be excluded from this data file e.g. hospital name for items prescribed in hospital but dispensed in the community?	
Comments:	

4: Publication of information on Dispenser Remuneration

ISD propose to replace the current quarterly release of remuneration information with a new annual remuneration publication.

Would an annual publication of remuneration data meet your needs?	
If not, then how frequently do you think remuneration data should be published?	
Comments:	

5: Publication of Prescription Cost Analysis data

This question should be considered in the context of question 3 above – it is possible that the monthly data file may contain data similar to the PCA publication, split by a lower level of aggregation.

Is the publication of an annual summary useful?	
What organisational breakdowns should be included in an annual summary of data e.g. Scotland level, NHS Board level?	
This is currently published by financial year, all other UK nations publish by calendar year. What is your preference?	
Should the PCA publication include items that are prescribed in hospital clinics and dispensed in community pharmacies?	

Should the analysis be split to reflect the volumes prescribed in different settings?	
Comments:	

6: Publication of data on Pharmacy Services

What organisational breakdowns should be included in a publication on pharmacy services e.g. Scotland, NHS Board?	
Would you prefer to see this information published by Financial Year? Or by Calendar Year?	
Please tell us about any specific information you would like to see included in this publication e.g. volumes, costs, patient registrations, demographic characteristics of patients using these services etc.	
Comments:	

7: Please add any further comments about prescribing statistics.

8: Optional - It would be helpful for us to know which stakeholder group you represent (e.g. NHS Board, member of public etc). If you are willing to be contacted by us in the future then please also give us your name and email address.

Stakeholder type – Name – Email -

Thank you for taking the time to provide your feedback to our consultation. Your input is very much appreciated and will be used to inform the development of how prescribing information is delivered in future.

Please email your comments to Nss.isdprescribing@nhs.net by 31st October 2015.

The Information Services Division will publish the findings of this consultation in December 2015 at www.isdscotland.org/prescribing