

GP Update

How does the Disability Discrimination Act affect Pharmacy Services?

What does the Act mean by Disability?

Disability is defined as

A physical or mental impairment, which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

Further Explanations

- Impairment includes physical impairments of the senses, such as sight and hearing and mental impairments including learning disabilities and mental illness.
- Long-term means effects that have lasted or are likely to last for more than 12 months.

How does the act affect Dispensing Services?

It is unlawful for a contractor to discriminate against a disabled person by failing to comply with a duty, in which the effect of that failure is to make it impossible or unreasonably difficult for a disabled person to make use of any services provided.

A contractor has a duty therefore to make reasonable adjustments to services provided to ensure that services are accessible.

The act states that supply of an auxiliary aid may be appropriate to support the use of a service by a disabled person.

Reasonable adjustments should be considered alongside both clinical and health and safety considerations for the patient and their family.

Examples of problems patients may have in using dispensing services.

- Unable to read label due to sight impairment
- Unable to manage medication regime due to dementia
- Unable to remove child resistant caps due to limited hand movement, resulting from arthritis

What reasonable adjustments could be made?

- Provision of an monitored dosage system
- Provision of a medication reminder chart or medicines administration chart
- Large print labels
- Winged topped lids

Evidence for Multicompartment Aids

There is limited evidence as to the effectiveness of multicompartment aids in improving patient compliance, indeed some patients struggle to use these aids effectively due to cognitive or mobility problems.

Assessing Patients Needs

New patients

In order to assist with meeting patient needs and protect against failing to meet DDA requirements it is advisable that patients are assessed to review what support they may require in using their medicines.

Patients who have previously had no compliance aid to support their medicines taking will need to be assessed to ensure that the most suitable support is given. Pharmacists will conduct a review with patients and may use local or nationally agreed forms (examples are attached).

It is the pharmacist's responsibility under DDA to assess any reasonable adjustments that may be required in the provision of a dispensing service. A Community Pharmacist may be willing to accept a referral from another healthcare professional, e.g. G.P. or Hospital Pharmacist, for supply of a compliance aid, if a full assessment has been made and is available for the pharmacist to refer to.

Existing patients

All patients should be assessed and support reviewed. It may be possible to manage some patients off an MDS system and provide a different and more suitable support mechanism.

Requests by carers

The PCT is currently working with formal carers e.g. Social Services, to negotiate a move away from use of devices by carers for medicines administration.

An aid should be issued to a patient based on the patient's assessment and needs not on the carers. A carer may be willing however to pay for provision of an aid.

Clinical need for dispensing in installments

Supply in seven day instalments may be appropriate for some patients for clinical or safety reasons, as assessed by the GP. If there are risks resulting from the patient having access to more than seven days worth of medication in their home e.g. if the patient is a suicide risk, a prescription for seven days should be supplied.

Summary

- As a general rule seven day prescriptions should not be used as a way of providing a multicompartiment aid.
- Seven day prescriptions are appropriate when there are clinical or safety reasons for ensuring patients have a limited supply of medication.
- All patients should be assessed to ensure that the most appropriate support for their medicines taking is given.
- Communication between GP and Pharmacist colleagues is essential to ensure that patient needs are effectively met and risks are minimised.

Other Resources

- You can make a difference- a good practice guide for primary care service providers. Disability Rights Commission & NHS.
Available at <http://www.psnc.org.uk>