

Medication safety an important priority for Irish health services

The Irish Medication Safety Network (IMSN), with the support of the HSE and the Rotunda Hospital, hosted two events this week to improve medication safety.

Medication safety is an important priority for the Irish health services. Internationally it is estimated that one medication error occurs per hospital in-patient per day, translating to over 3 million medication errors in Irish public hospitals per year. A small proportion of errors result in patient harm, but all are potentially preventable.

A two day Medication Safety Intensive course for over 100 participants was delivered by the Institute for Safe Medication Practices (ISMP), a US not-for-profit organisation renowned as world experts in the field of medication safety. It is the first time that the course has been run in Europe and ISMP translated their very highly rated course to the Irish setting.

The course, attended by pharmacists, nurses, doctors and risk managers from Irish hospitals, was followed today by a one day National Medication Safety Summit, which brought together 250 healthcare professionals, health service leaders and representatives from bodies connected to medication safety and Irish and international speakers.

Speaking at the summit, Mr Paul Tighe, Deputy Chair of the IMSN and Chief Pharmacist at St. Vincent's University Hospital, commented that "The IMSN is striving to improve awareness about medication safety issues and to provide guidance to healthcare staff who are working to minimise harm arising from medication errors. We are delighted that our colleagues from the ISMP are here to share expertise and provide guidance on how systematic approaches to medication safety have been structured internationally. Staff from hospitals around the country have been provided with training on effective risk reduction strategies. I have no doubt Irish patients will benefit from the knowledge acquired over the past few days."

Ms Ciara Kirke, Clinical Lead of the National Medication Safety Programme, HSE Quality Improvement, said that medication safety is a priority for the HSE and the organisation is embarking on a new programme to tackle the issue of patient harmed associated with medicines. "Ireland is uniquely poised to bring about improved medication safety. We have exemplars of best practice throughout the country, dedicated professionals focussed on medication safety, a wealth of high-quality research and a will to collaborate and improve. The HSE QID is delighted to support this course and summit to bring about shared understanding of the problem and how we can design systems and use information to minimise the risk of error and patient harm. The HSE QID Medication Safety Programme looks forward to working with Irish hospitals in an improvement partnership to further the impact of this worthwhile initiative"

Dr Allen Vaida, Executive Vice President of the ISMP, said today, “we are delighted to share our experiences and recommendations with healthcare practitioners in Ireland to advance medication safety for patients in Ireland. We want to thank and commend IMSN, HSE, and the other government agencies and organizers for their collaboration and enthusiasm to make this program possible. “

Dr Brian Cleary, Rotunda Hospital Chief Pharmacist and RCSI Honorary Clinical Associate Professor, said, “The IMSN aimed to draw attention to the problem of medication errors this week and to ensure that effective risk reduction strategies are implemented to improve medication use processes. The Irish health services need to learn from international experience and ensure that no patient is harmed by preventable medication errors. Effective risk reduction strategies applied at a national level will help to achieve this.”

Notes to Editors

About the Irish Medication Safety Network (IMSN):

The IMSN is a voluntary and independent group of hospital pharmacists, whose principal aim is to improve patient safety with regard to the use of medicines through collaboration, shared learning and action. Established in 2006, the network develops guidelines, protocols and alerts on medication safety concerns which it distributes across all public and private Irish hospitals, in addition to hosting annual conferences.

Website: www.imsn.ie

Email: enquiries@imsn.ie

About the Institute of Safe Medication Practices (ISMP):

The Institute for Safe Medication Practices (ISMP), is a US non-profit organization devoted entirely to medication error prevention and safe medication use. ISMP represents over 35 years of experience in helping healthcare practitioners keep patients safe, and continues to lead efforts to improve the medication use process. The organization is known and respected worldwide as the premier resource for impartial, timely, and accurate medication safety information.

Website: www.ismp.org

About the Health Services Executive Quality Improvement Division (HSE QID):

The division led by Dr. Philip Crowley was established in January 2015. The mission of the QID team is to provide leadership by working with patients, families and all who work in the health system to innovate and improve quality and safety of care by championing, educating, partnering and demonstrating quality improvement. Our vision is working in partnership to create safe quality care.

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