Can we achieve safe clinical practice via remote working?

Elizabeth Stuart, David Fisher, Scott Barrett, Wasim Baqir

Introduction

This service improvement/practice research focused on one hospital within the trust during the Covid-19 pandemic to reduce staff burnout while on the wards. Staff burnout is associated with medical errors and poor patient care[1]. Interventions such as improving workplace infrastructure can help reduce this.[2]

The aim was to ascertain how confident staff felt working on ward without their colleague, and then remotely with limited access to ward resources.
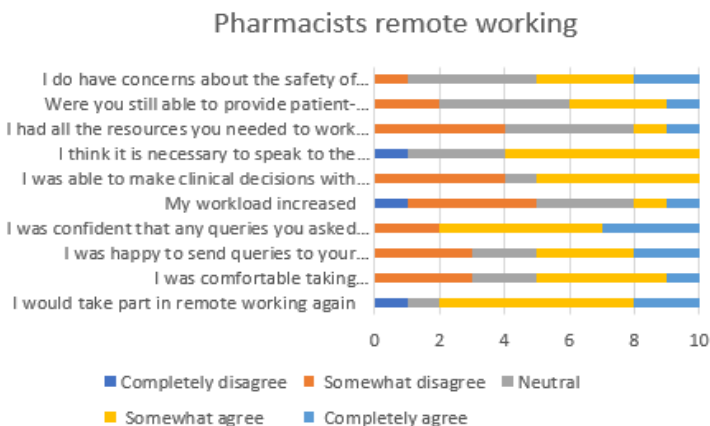
Method

Semi-structured interviews identified key areas of concern to further explore through a questionnaire using Linkert-Scaling. Weightings were assigned to each answer in the survey:

- completely disagree = 0%,
- somewhat disagree = 25%
- neutral = 50%
- somewhat agree = 75%
- completely agree = 100%

The mean agreeable % for each statement was calculated for both pharmacists and technicians, an average below 50% was regarded as overall disagreement with the statement.
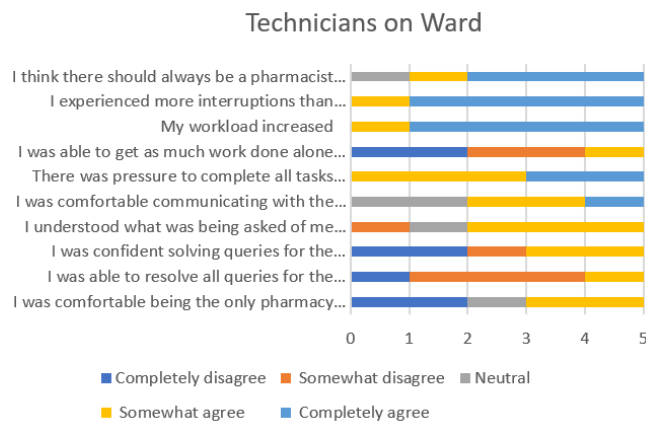
Discussion & Impact on Future Service

This generated a lot of data that suggested both pharmacists and technicians had concerns about the safety of remote working.

Remote working was introduced to protect staff wellbeing and reduce burnout, however there is an increased workload pressure on the ward which can also cause staff burnout and is therefore is counter-productive.

Remote working is a beneficial method of ensuring pharmacy tasks are completed while minimising footfall onto the ward. The ability to remote work utilises staff and resources that otherwise may not have been used, as it provides staff the flexibility to cover multiple wards at once, across different sites.

The development of digital patient records in the future could impact the effectiveness of working offsite, providing the remote worker with more resources to use.

Results

Pharmacists remote working

Technicians on Ward

References
1. Montgomery, A., Panagopoulou, E, et al. 2019. Burnout in healthcare: the case for organisational change. *BMJ*, p.4774.
2. Giorgi, G., Lecca, L., et al. 2020. COVID-19-Related Mental Health Effects in the Workplace: A Narrative Review. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 17(21), p.7857.