

Pharmacist Opioid Intervention Clinics

Background



The North East of England and Teesside especially, are recognised as areas of high opioid prescribing. We wanted to devise a programme of work for primary care to support reduction in opioid prescribing and facilitate safe prescribing.

The NECS Medicines Optimisation Team and Tees Valley CCG worked closely with South Tees Hospital Foundation Trust (STHFT) in order to explore ways of addressing this issue. STHFT operates an opioid reduction clinic, and members of their pain team have been actively involved in delivering the IWOTCH project (Improving the Wellbeing of People with Opioid Treated Chronic Pain), a support programme that aims to improve the everyday functioning for people living with chronic pain and reduce their opioid use.

Working with the Trust, we were keen to replicate the IWOTCH project in primary care in Tees Valley, with a focus to address the high opioid prescribing rates, and at the same time ensure that patient outcomes and expectations were managed appropriately.

What we did



Funding, was secured from the CCG in order to fund an education programme, delivered virtually, for primary care pharmacists to deliver local IWOTCH based opioid interventions. Two 4 hour interactive education sessions, led by a local pain consultant and supported by the trust pain specialist pharmacist, were delivered to over 30 primary care pharmacists from across Tees Valley.

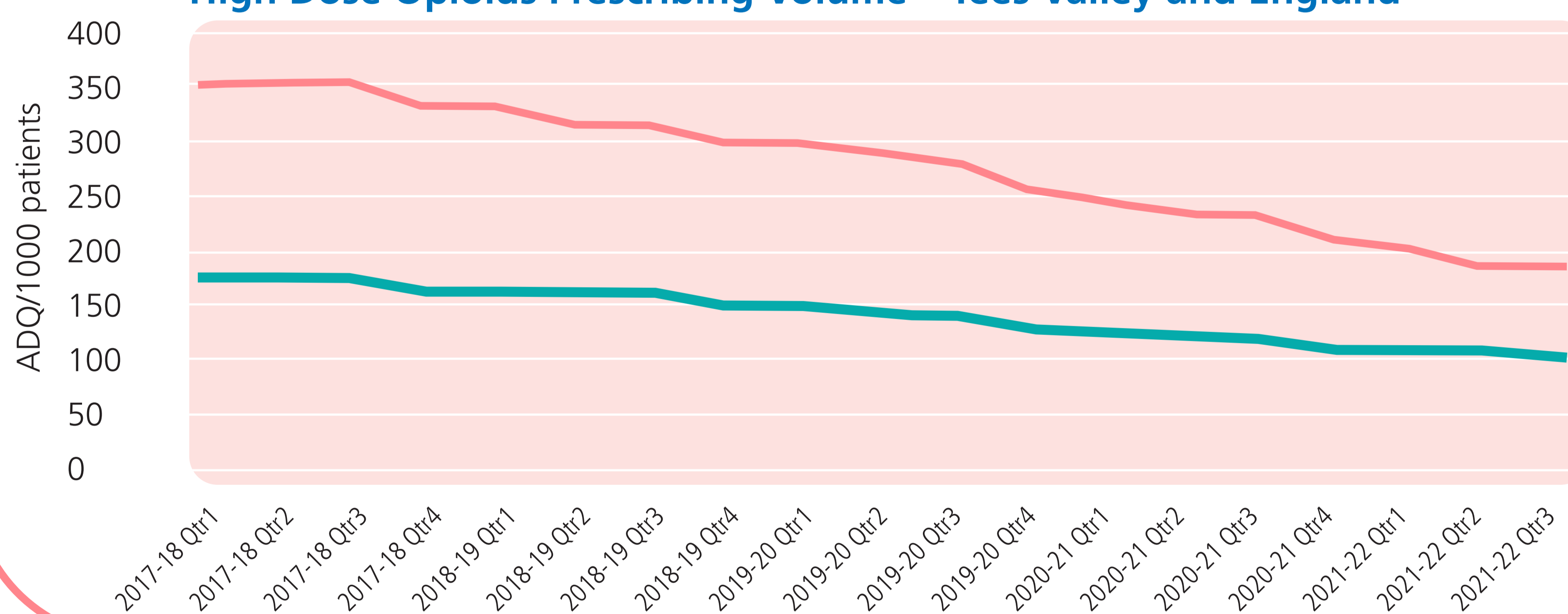
Following the education programme, the pharmacists explored ways in which identified patients could be engaged and encouraged to take part in the intervention clinics using the IWOTCH structured approach; the majority of needed to be delivered via telephone, or online due to the pandemic.

Successes



- An initial education session was attended by 30 primary care pharmacists who now have a greater knowledge of opioid reduction programmes, alongside networks being made with the key individuals in the local trust involved in pain management
- A further education session for primary care pharmacists, being expanded to a wider audience to include first contact physiotherapists
- Funding for the trust specialist pain pharmacist has been agreed by the CCG to provide dedicated support to primary care practitioners has been agreed for a further year
- Waiting times in the trust opioid reduction clinics have reduced due to the additional expertise in primary care as a result of the education sessions
- Implementation of a local trust opioid discharge policy to reduce patient opioid seeking behaviour post surgery
- A reduction in high dose opioid prescribing volume of 48% from April 2017, compared to 40% nationally over the same time period

High Dose Opioids Prescribing Volume – Tees Valley and England



Conclusions



This initiative has undoubtedly raised awareness of high dose opioid prescribing and we have seen some very promising reductions in high dose opioids prescribing.

The FT now has a very robust discharge policy in relation to opioids; patients are counselled that the quantity of opioid prescribed as part of discharge should be sufficient for their needs and should not ask their GP for further supplies.

All practices across the CCG now have access to the pain specialist pharmacist from the trust who now has one day per week dedicated to supporting pharmacists who took part in the education sessions.