Stock Shortages

Communication Between Health Professionals - Use the SBAR Method

The SBAR (Situation, Background, Assessment and Recommendation) is a proven method for communicating between healthcare professionals[1]. SBAR is an easy to use, structured form of communication that enables key information to be transferred accurately between individuals and provides a recommendation / alternative solution to the issue.

Community Pharmacy West Yorkshire is aware of the unprecedented stock issues that pharmacy contractors are facing and that community pharmacy teams are working really hard to make sure patients get the medicines they need. We know that pharmacies are spending significant time trying to source drugs. The SBAR tool may help reduce the time taken for your pharmacy to raise stock issues with the prescriber.

In Community Pharmacy West Yorkshire's discussions with GPs, LMCs and CCGs we have reports of the impact of stock shortages also has on GP practices. One common feedback is that the GP does not know what potential alternatives the pharmacy has in stock. The use of SBAR in communicating stock issues would help with this situation.

SBAR Framework for Communication

Pharmacy: **Date:** **Contact Name:** **Contact Details:**	**The details of the pharmacy** **The date the issue was identified** **The name of the person who has raised the issue** **The contact details for the person who has raised the issue** **(YOU MAY WISH TO USE THE PHARMACY STAMP)**
Situation	*Describe the situation* *Product that has been out of stock.* *Reason out of stock: manufacturers problem, quota line, medicines shortage.*
Background	*Provide background information* *How long has the problem been going on for?* *Have you tried to source it from other pharmacies or wholesalers?* *Have you spoken directly to the manufacturers?*
Assessment	*Assessment of the situation* *How long do you anticipate it will not be available for?* *Have the suppliers / wholesalers / manufacturers given you a date it will be back in stock?* *When do you want the matter resolved by?*
Recommendation	*Suggest possible alternatives that can be prescribed noting that you are listing products currently available (noting when you do not have enough information to make a recommendation for the individual patient).* *Only recommend a product that you can source.* *It may be useful to suggest a few alternatives if possible.* *If no alternative is available ask the prescriber to make a suggestion.*

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[1] https://improvement.nhs.uk/documents/2162/sbar-communication-tool.pdf

The SBAR tool can be used as communication tool for a wide range of issues and by all members of the team. Its use isn't limited to stock issues. This model can be used for other purposes, e.g. if a patient needs to be care navigated to another healthcare professional.

Community Pharmacy West Yorkshire recommends that if possible, you discuss your plans to use a form to notify practices of shortages / requests for an alternative script with the GP practice. This should help with the acceptability of the form by the practice team.

We are aware that contractors may already have agreed and developed a template to communicate drug shortages with their practice. Examples are included at the end of this document. You may wish to discuss with your local GP practice which template / communication route works best for you both.

Also see the other resources that Community Pharmacy West Yorkshire has produced to assist you with medicines shortages on our website here: https://www.cpwy.org/pharmacy-contracts-services/essential-services/dispensing/#MS.

Key Information to Include in Communications About Shortages
This is not exhaustive and the information included may be different for your pharmacy.

Feedback from GP practices is that they find it helpful when the following information is included:

- *Reason for medicine being out of stock.*
- *How long it is anticipated the medicine will be out of stock (if known).*
- *Some assurance that alternative sources of the medicine have been tried (e.g. multiple wholesalers).*
- *If the suppliers / wholesalers / manufacturers have given you a date when it will be back in stock.*
- *What products are available - it may be useful to suggest a few alternatives, if possible.*
- *Outline your recommendation for a possible alternative drug(s) which have similar properties that can currently be sourced (see notes below regarding recommending an alternative).*
- *Cost of alternative – and that this is as near cost neutral as possible.*
- *When the pharmacy needs the matter resolved by i.e. when the patient runs out of medicine.*
- *A note that you will let the GP practice know when the product is back in stock, if this is possible.*

Key Factors to Consider Before Recommending an Alternative
Although the responsibility for safe and appropriate prescribing rests with the prescriber, those recommending changes to prescriptions must ensure that recommendations are appropriate for each patient and within your scope of competency to recommend.

It would be preferable to speak to the GP where a change in drug / dose is being considered. You may wish to approach the discussion by asking "if you give me some clinical alternatives that you would like to prescribe, I can then check the availability information on those medicines".

- *Consider the clinical indication for the drug to ensure that any recommended alternative is appropriate (and licenced).*
- *Ensure that if a recommendation for a possible alternative is being made for a different brand of drug that the form and dose are equivalent (e.g. that the dose and combination of hormones in an alternative HRT are the same as was originally prescribed).*

- *If a product that is being recommended is a different drug to that prescribed, then make this clear in your communication with the GP.*
- *Consider if there are other clinical factors such as allergies, renal or hepatic impairment, monitoring requirements, previous treatments etc.*
- *You may want to add a note to any recommended product to make clear that you do not have access to the full patient record and the recommendation that you made was done with the best information available to you.*

If you do not have enough information to give a recommendation for an alternative medicine then let the prescriber know this is the case and offer to discuss with the prescriber the alternatives that they would like to prescribe and you will let them know about stock availability.

An example when the SBAR tool maybe used in practice is when a product is not available, and a branded product is required. Community Pharmacy West Yorkshire does not condone the prescribing by brand unless there is a clinical need. The SBAR tool clearly highlights the reason why a branded product is being requested.

Example 1

Pharmacy: Date: Contact Name: Contact Details:	**Anywhere Pharmacy** **22 06 2019** **Joe T Pharmacist** **Tel: 0113 272 7560 pharmacynhsmailaddress**
Situation	Mrs Farah Patient, 24 High Street NHS number 123 456 7890 Prescribed Losartan 50mg Current supply runs out on date / 7 days time
Background	Ongoing problem of obtaining Losartan for the last 6 months from wholesalers. Other pharmacies within the area do not have supplies of the medication. Patient has previously tried other antihypertensive but experienced side effects and does not want to change.
Assessment	Spoke with wholesalers who are unable to specify a date of when to expect the generic losartan to be available again.
Recommendation	Please prescribe Cozaar 50mg tablets. We are aware this is a branded product but we are unable to supply Cozaar against a generic prescription for Losartan due to the significant price difference. If you wish to prescribe an alternative, please could you arrange to speak with the patient before Friday as that is when the patient will run out of medication. We am happy to be contacted to discuss class alternatives to Losartan and their stock availability.

Issues with MDS Trays
If the situation you need to discuss is in relation to MDS, there are also two forms available for notifying GPs of new requests for MDS for patients and for notifying them of changes to MDS patients' medication: https://www.cpwy.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/128/2022/03/19-12-MDS-Notification-CPWY-vs-5-for-website.pdf.

Example 2

Pharmacy Name: **Pharmacy Address:** **Pharmacy Contact details:** **Date:**	*Or Pharmacy Branch Stamp*
Name of Prescriber:	
Name of Practice:	

Patient Name:	*Attach bag label*
Patient DOB:	
Usual Prescription:	
Current Supply Issues:	☐ Wholesalers out of stock. ☐ Other local chemists out of stock. ☐ No emergency stock available from wholesaler.
Expected Duration of Supply Problem:	

We are currently unable to supply the following medication for your patient named above.
Please could you issue a prescription for an appropriate alternative. The suggested alternative is in stock and I have included the assumed diagnosis. Due to the limited patient information available to me, please check the alternative is suitable for this patient and please prescribe for 28 days to reduce medicines wastage.

We will speak to the patient to ensure they understand the change in medication and the reason for the change.

Assumed Diagnosis	
Possible Alternative(s)	
No direct alternative available. **Other options.**	

Thank you for your help.
Please arrange for the prescription to be sent electronically to _____
Pharmacy (if not usual nominated pharmacy), by _____ (date).

Name:_____ Job Role:_____

Example 3

Pharmacy Name: Pharmacy Address: Pharmacy Contact details: Date:	*Or Pharmacy Branch Stamp*
Name of Prescriber:	
Name of Practice:	

Patient Name	*Attach bag label*
Patient DOB	
Situation (What's the problem?)	
Background (What's caused the problem?)	
Assessment (How long will this be a problem? Will the problem go away on its own?)	
Recommendation (What would you like to happen and by when?)	

The above situation has arisen for one of your patients and we'd really appreciate your help in resolving the issue. Thank you.

Pharmacy _____ **by** _____**(date)**

Name:_____ **Job Role:**_____