

Wide-reaching report finds strong support for nurse and pharmacist prescribing

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Greater powers introduced by the government to enable specially trained nurses and pharmacists to prescribe medication in England have been successfully adopted, according to a new report.

Health service researchers from the universities of Southampton and Keele found widespread acceptance of the new powers among patients and that prescribing practices were safe and appropriate for the type of [medical conditions](#) being treated.

The Department of Health-funded report, published today (Tuesday, 10 May 2011), gives a national 'snapshot' of how successfully nurse and [pharmacist](#) prescribing is being used in [primary care](#) trusts, GP surgeries and hospitals.

"This study is the first national evaluation of independent prescribing by [nurses](#) and pharmacists since legislation in 2006 enabled nurses and pharmacists to independently prescribe across an extensive range of medicines. Our research shows that the practice is becoming a well-integrated and established means of managing a patient's condition," comments Sue Latter, professor of nursing at the University of Southampton, who led the study.

"We were also able to highlight areas to the government where expansion of non-medical prescribing could strengthen NHS services in order to meet health care needs of the future."

The legislation, which gave experienced nurses and pharmacists powers to prescribe medication to patients, was viewed by some as controversial when it was introduced in 2006. Specially trained nurses and pharmacists in England are now able to manage all aspects of a patient's treatment including diagnosis, prescription and monitoring, without supervision by a doctor.

"Our research shows that nurse and pharmacist independent prescribers are now making a substantial contribution to patient care which is safe and of good quality," says Alison Blenkinsopp, professor of the practice of pharmacy at Keele University.

"Commissioners of healthcare can use our findings to make the most effective use of nurse and pharmacist prescribing when they are commissioning services."

The report also found that:

- 86 per cent of nurses and 71 per cent of pharmacists are using their new powers after training as a prescriber.
- Most nurses and pharmacists are prescribing in a primary care setting, with substantial numbers also in secondary care settings, such as hospitals.
- Most patients did not mind whether they received care from a [nurse](#), pharmacist or a doctor.
- Enabling non-medical prescribing to develop further, by additional training of nurses and pharmacists to treat patients with more than one [medical](#) condition, could improve patient care and efficiency in the health service.

Provided by University of Southampton

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