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CHILDREN'S MEDICINES: WHAT INFORMATION DO PARENTS WANT TO KNOW AND ARE THEY SATISFIED WITH THE INFORMATION THEY RECEIVE

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Aim To investigate what information parents want about their child's new medicines and whether parents are satisfied with the information they currently receive.

Method Parents of children prescribed a new medicine at a large paediatric hospital were surveyed using a two-part questionnaire. Part 1 asked the parent how much information they wanted to receive concerning 18 medicine-related topics, such as 'what the medicine does', 'correct storage of medicine' and 'what are the risks of not taking the medicine'. Part 2 asked how satisfied the parent was with the information they were given concerning the 18 topics. Part 2 was completed after counselling had been provided about the new medicine. The 'Satisfaction with Information about Medicines' scale¹ was used to categorise responses to the questions in Part 2. Additional data concerning demographics and the child's medical and medication history were collected. Data were analysed by SPSS v22 using one-way analysis of variance, independent sample t-tests and Spearman's correlation tests.

Results Of 171 parents of paediatric patients prescribed a new medicine who were approached, 165 (84% female) agreed to participate. Nearly two thirds of the new medicines prescribed were for acute conditions. The average length of stay of inpatients was six days. Most participants (66%) wanted "as detailed information as possible" regarding 'what the medicine does', 'how to administer it', 'common side effects' and 'what to do if their child's symptoms do not improve'. A greater desire for information was seen for parents of children with longer stays in hospital ($p < 0.01$) and for parents of children with chronic conditions ($p < 0.05$). Most parents (63%) were satisfied with the information they currently receive, particularly concerning 'the correct administration of the medicine' and 'what the medication does'. Parents indicated a preference for receiving information in both a verbal and written format.

Conclusion Most parents want detailed information, in both written and verbal form, about their child's new medicine. Overall, most parents were satisfied with the information they currently receive. Future studies could investigate information provision by specific healthcare professionals or differences between hospitals. The findings from further work could form the basis for developing guidelines for counselling training purposes.

REFERENCE

- 1 Horne R, Hankins M, Jenkins R. The Satisfaction with Information about Medicines Scale (SIMS): a new measurement tool for audit and research. *Qual Health Care* 2001;10:135-40.