

“ Using medication dispensers can help to reduce the number of home care visits required, avoid admissions to residential care and reduce the pressure on primary and secondary care, generating financial efficiencies.



Hull City Council's Telecare Team was established to improve the safety and health of Hull's residents, particularly those who are older, have dementia, are carers or who have been recently discharged from hospital. A wide range of telecare solutions are available, including medication dispensers. The dispenser can be filled by a family member or pharmacist and will emit an audible beep when it's time for the user to take their medicine. If the dispenser doesn't sense that tablets have been removed it can be programmed to raise an alert on a family member's mobile, or in some cases call the Kingston Care control centre.

Introduction

Mrs A was regularly missing her tablets because of loss of short-term memory. She was prescribed eight tablets a day but becoming depressed because she was regularly missing her anti-depressant tablet, and was getting confused with her blister-pack tablets as the days on the pack did not match with the day she thought it was. She lives alone and so was at risk of hospitalisation due to missed doses, depression or overdosing. It was therefore decided to trial a medication dispenser with Mrs A to see if this could remove the immediate risk and give Mrs A the confidence needed to self-medicate on a continuous basis.

Results

Mrs A has been using the pill dispenser for four weeks now and it has made a big difference. She takes seven tablets in the morning and one in the evening. **Of 112 tablets due in the first two weeks, she only missed two.** Although initially she was wary of the audible alarm when she started using the dispenser, it took a big burden from her; she no longer needed to worry about what day it was but simply took the tablets when the machine sounded and dispensed the tablets. Her family refill the pill dispenser as required (fortnightly).

The dispenser has prevented Mrs A needing a homecare service to help her with her medicines and averted the need for residential care which may have resulted as a consequence of poor health due to not taking her medications as prescribed.

Source: Telecare/Lifeline update 2014/2015, Hull City Council

The dispenser alarm system has also given Mrs A a regular routine (getting up at 8a.m. and getting ready for bed at 10p.m.), improved her sleep pattern, given her extra confidence and increased independence and reduced her confusion. Her family are reassured that she is taking her tablets as she should and no longer need to ring to check.

Financial benefits

Using medication dispensers can deliver significant savings. A daily home care medication call would typically cost £45 per week, and with a medication dispenser costing £150 it can pay for itself in three weeks. Extrapolating these savings across the 100 medication dispensers that have been provided in Hull in the last financial year, **annual savings could be over £200,000 based on preventing just one medication call per day.**

The monitoring and improvement in medication compliance can also have an impact on primary and secondary care; if a patient regularly takes their medication they may be less likely to become ill or their health condition deteriorate.



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