

OPTICare – applying a science of generalism to tackling problematic polypharmacy
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Abstract:

The growing prevalence of problematic polypharmacy has contributed to the recognition that we need to think differently about how we use medicines.

Problematic polypharmacy is the term used to describe the situation when a person taking several medicines on a long-term basis experiences more disruption than benefit from the medicines. In 2013, a critical report from the Kings Fund argued that to overcome this problem, we need to find ways to support a compromise between the views of prescribers and users of medicines (patients), in order to support an informed choice about medication use. However, we still don't know how best to achieve that in practice.

My own work has focused on revitalising the expertise of generalist practice. Generalism is a philosophy of clinical practice described by the RCGP as expertise in whole person medicine. Working with colleagues from clinical and academic backgrounds, we have translated that description into an account of generalist expertise as a complex intervention and so opened the door to critical scientific study of the development, delivery and impact of generalist care - with current projects in the areas of multimorbidity, difficult mental health, acute care and the one I will discuss today - problematic polypharmacy.

PenCLAHRC identified tackling problematic polypharmacy as a priority area of work. The result was the development of OPTICare. In this seminar, I will introduce the work being done by our team of clinicians, academics and patients to apply the science of generalism to developing a new model of individually tailored prescribing.