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UK

Patient group declare support for summary care record

A year on from a Ministerial review that confirmed the importance of Summary Care Records in supporting urgent and emergency care, patient groups are advocating its use to improve care for the millions of people with long term conditions they represent.

The Muscular Dystrophy Campaign recently recommended that their patients consider adding important information about their conditions to their Summary Care Record to improve their experience of hospital care. Mencap, Asthma UK, Diabetes UK and the British Lung Foundation are also now looking to raise awareness among their members about how the record could benefit patients when they are being treated by doctors and nurses in an emergency who may be unfamiliar with their particular condition.

The Summary Care Record is a secure, electronic patient record which is currently being introduced in England. Last October's review, commissioned by Health Minister Simon Burns, restricted the record to carrying basic information about medications, allergies and bad reactions to drugs. So for example, patients with asthma would no longer need to be asked to repeat their medical history while struggling to breathe. Patients can however speak to their GP about adding extra information they may want the NHS to know about them in an emergency to their Summary Care Record.

The main issue identified by patient groups which the SCR could help remedy is patients having difficulties communicating their needs; whether it is a nurse not knowing how to tell if a patient with learning disabilities and limited verbal skills is in pain to ensuring a doctor unfamiliar with neuromuscular conditions does not deliver inappropriate treatment that could leave a patient permanently needing to use a wheelchair.

Following the Ministerial review, patients can easily opt out of having a Summary Care Record if they wish to by using the opt out form and freepost envelope included in letters being sent to patients or by consulting their GP. As an added safeguard, patients will always be asked their permission before their SCR is viewed.

For more information, please visit: www.dh.gov.uk

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