Implementation of medicationschedule as a tool: an intensive awareness project

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Background Misuse of medication can have far-reaching consequences. Though, people do not yet see the importance and usefulness of a medication schedule. This is regrettable, because proper use of medication can be helped if the medication instructions are clearly formulated and shared between healthcare providers and the patient.

Purpose To study if an intensive awareness programme during 6 months can help to 1) improve significantly knowledge and use of the medication schedule and 2) to ensure that polymedicated inhabitants of Merelbeke have a medication scheme.

Method This project is based on a cooperation between healthcare providers (pharmacists, doctors, nurses, dentists, ?), home care services, health insurance funds, but also civil society (senior citizen clubs, women’s associations, local communities, ?). Following awareness activities were organised: doctors and pharmacists were asked to promote the use of the medication schedule as a tool to clarify the medication plan and medication instructions; they were also asked to make medication schedules and share them on Vitalink, a shared platform for use in primary care. Nurses, dentists, social workers, centers for public assistance were asked to promote the importance of the medication schedule for polymedicated patients. Information sessions were held for local senior and women associations. Information has been given at the local market. Municipal communication channels (website, door-to-door magazines, ...) were used. A specific project website and social media (facebook) were used. Measured parameters: 1) knowledge by interviewing 100 persons at baseline, 6 months and 9 months. 2) number of patients that brought there medication schedule to the hospital; 3) number of doctors and pharmacists loading up and consulting the medication schedule in Vitalink.

Findings Polymedicated patients that have a medication schedule increased from 42,85% at baseline to 75% at 6 months and 75% at 9 months. In the hospital, the number of people of Merelbeke who brought their medication schedule with them when hospitalized increased from 39% to 62 % at 6 months and 67% at 9 months. The comparison between Merelbeke and the whole Flemish area for the use of Vitalink showed that the use of a digital shared medication schedule was significantly more adopted in Merelbeke (loading of medication schedule at 6 months: 28,77/month in Flanders, 54,39/month in Merelbeke. Consulting medication schedule at 6 months: 82,93/month in Flanders, 299,35/month in Merelbeke).

Conclusion Working intensively on awareness with the whole community and all stakeholders allows to make steps forward in the implementation of the use of a medication schedule.