

Appendix 1: Interview schedule

INTRODUCTION

As you know, we are studying the nature, frequency and causes of prescribing errors as part of this study into the reliability of healthcare systems. The overall aim of the study is to identify the systems factors involved so that strategies for preventing errors can be identified. We are studying this in three different hospitals and interviewing a sample of staff in each of these hospitals. I would therefore like to ask you a series of questions about the factors that you feel contribute to prescribing errors. This should take around 20 minutes.

As the participant information leaflet explains, your participation is entirely voluntary and you are free to withdraw. If you do not wish to answer any particular question, then please just say so. There are no right or wrong answers and I am interested in your own personal point of view. The identities of all participants will remain strictly confidential and it will not be possible to identify individual members of staff, clinical teams or hospitals from the final results.

Would you mind if I taped our conversation so that I do not have to write everything down?

Do you have any questions before we begin?

QUESTIONS

Can you tell me a bit about your background - how long have you worked in this hospital?

When did you start working in this speciality?

[add other background questions as needed – the main aim here is to put the interviewee at ease]

How reliable do you think the process of prescribing is?

[This question will allow us to explore the baseline point of view of the participant regarding the reliability of the system]

Could you give us an example of a prescribing error that you have been aware of?

[With this question the aim is to obtain a narrative account from the interviewee in terms of remembering their own experience of a prescribing error, if any]

Why do you think this occurred?

Can you tell me about prescribing this medication?

How familiar do you think the prescriber would have been with this medication?

Are there any guidelines for prescribing this drug?

- how useful are these guidelines?
- is there anything you do not like about these guidelines/instructions?
- do users have training in their use?

Were there any communication problems (either written or verbal)?

Was all the required information available?

Were there any unusual circumstances or stressors?

For each relevant factor, use prompts such as:

- How does this affect prescribers?
- What happens?
- Does this occur in general?

What needs to be done to put it right?

Could you suggest any solutions?

These are some examples of prescribing errors identified in our earlier study identifying prescribing errors on this ward.

[here the researcher will give the interviewee a brief list presenting a selection of the prescribing errors identified in the quantitative part of the study – a range of different errors in terms of error type and the stage of the prescribing process in which they occurred]

Why do you think these types of error occur?

Can you tell me about prescribing on this ward?

How familiar do you think the prescriber would have been with these medications?

Are there any guidelines for prescribing these drugs?

- how useful are these guidelines?
- is there anything you do not like about these guidelines/instructions?
- do users have training in their use?

Are there communication problems (either written or verbal)?

Is all the required information available?

Are there any particular circumstances or stressors on this ward?

For each relevant factor, use prompts such as:

- How does this affect prescribers?
- What happens?
- Does this occur in general?

What needs to be done to put it right?

Could you suggest any solutions?

END