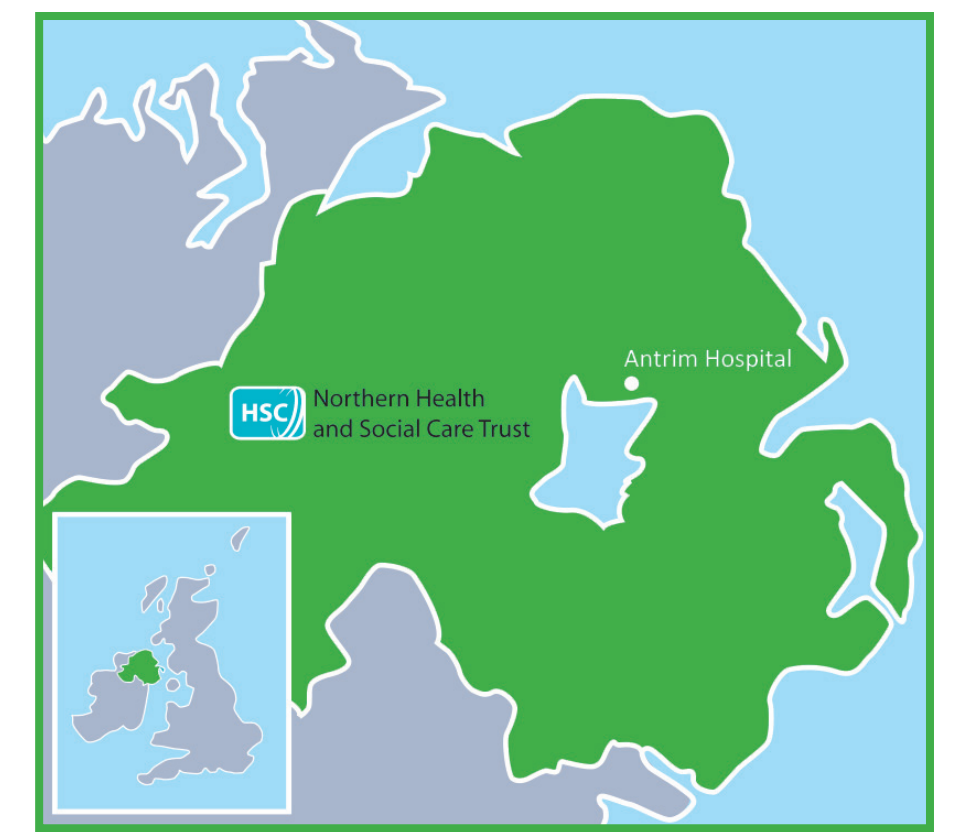


Medicines Optimisation in Northern Ireland: STEPSelect



Introduction

In Northern Ireland (NI), a Medicines Optimisation (MO) project has been successfully implemented by the Northern Health and Social Care Trust (NHSCT) over the last few years and continues to be developed. Historically, the approach taken to reduce medicines expenditure has been to focus almost exclusively on costs and cost-cutting initiatives. This methodology has had only limited success, as it fails to address the more fundamental aspects of the quality and safety of medicine use. Hence, in NI a new strategy was adopted, based on the premise that quality and safety drive health gain and economy. Thus, the model STEPSelect was developed (Safe Therapeutic Economic Pharmaceutical Selection) to ensure that medicines selection is fundamentally based on clinically related content such as efficiency, safety, documented effects on clinical end points and ease of administration.

STEPSelect

The STEPSelect method looks in the first instance at the clinical features of health technologies. At a later stage of the evaluation, product quality and fitness for purpose are assessed (the so-called risk assessment stage) as well as the budget impact of a health technology and appropriate procurement steps and processes. Evaluations are carried out by Expert Groups, which are composed on the basis of a multidisciplinary nature consisting of clinicians, pharmacists, nurses and other staff as appropriate.

STEPSelect is a web based tool developed by Digitalis Mm Ltd, enabling clinicians and other health care providers and managers to comprehensively select and procure medicines and medical devices.

Stage 1: Clinical Evaluation

- Literature evidence compiled by professional editorial network of Digitalis
- Review evidence supplied by Pharmaceutical Industry: Additional to the Literature Review (STEPSelect) & best evidence
- Assign scores to each product and relative weights to each selection criteria
- Ranking of chemical entities to proceed to Stage 2

Stage 2: Safety & Risk Assessment

- Product samples obtained from Industry
- Assessed using modified versions of national QC and Risk Assessment tools for Medicinal products: Product Quality and Fitness for Purpose (PQFFP) & Medicines Error Potential Assessment (MEPA)
- PQFFP (Pass/ Fail) ; MEPA (Low, Med, High)
- Ranking of chemical entities & MEPA scores to proceed to Stage 3

Stage 3: Budget Impact Analysis

- Annual usage data obtained to allow comparison of products within the same class
- Ranking of chemical entities to proceed to Stage 4

Stage 4: Contract & Guidance

- Guidance produced - will inform service of products suitable for prescribing first line in NI
- Relevant contracts put in place

Benefits

- Reduced medicines related adverse events
- Improved Quality: Drug Selection based on safety & efficiency, then cost
- Improved Efficiency: Cost-effective drug selection, reduced stockholding & reduction of out of date stock
- Robust, transparent, defensible process

Efficiency Gains

In NI the STEPSelect technology has been applied to procurement of medicines in many different therapeutic groups such as statins, erythropoietin stimulating agents (ESA's) and the use of biologicals in rheumatoid arthritis. Results with the method have invariably been positive in terms of support by clinicians and quality and cost reductions of prescribing, often in the region of 20-25% per therapeutic group.

Hospital Prescribing £ per need weighted patient (McKinsey Report 2010)

N.Ireland	£58
N. Ireland 7%	£54
N.Ireland 16%	£50
England	£64

References:
1. M.G.Scott, J.C.McElroy and R.Janknegt. Safe Therapeutic Economic Pharmaceutical Selection (STEPSelect): Development, introduction and use in Northern Ireland, European Journal of Hospital Pharmacy Practice, 16, 81-83, 2010
2. M.G.Scott. Pharmaceutical Clinical Effectiveness Programme (PCEP) - STEPSelect (Safe Therapeutic Economic Pharmaceutical Selection) British Journal of Medicine Procurement 3 23-26, 2011

Interactive Website

- Tablet devices for Expert Group members
- Project mentor
- Project key for limited access for special target groups
- e-sessions to highlight choices for special interest groups
- Comprehensive stakeholder input via these interactive mechanisms

Summary

- Supports a clinician driven procurement process
- Process is based on the principles of quality and safety
- Supports guidance and formulary development and maintenance
- Maximises health care resource utilisation
- A key component of Medicines Optimisation

Conclusion

STEPSelect is just one of the strategies adopted in NI to optimise the use of medicines. In 2015, the NI Government decided to fund a new initiative setting up a "Medicines Optimisation Innovation Centre" (MOIC). MOIC will actively promote the experience of NI in MO across the EU and beyond and has started working with many governments and public health insurance agencies as well as the World Bank. MOIC is in the process of applying for WHO Collaborating Centre status for MO. It will also continue to develop new initiatives to further enhance MO.