Improving LARC uptake:

A retrospective study into the role and impact of enhanced sexual health services in Tower Hamlets Community Pharmacies

April 2015 - March 2016

A Peacham M Symonds and L Sarner

BACKGROUND

Despite a 68.8% fall in <18 conceptions in Tower Hamlets (TH) between 1998-2014, unwanted pregnancies and low uptake of LARC in 15-44 year olds continue to be problematic

- 66.2% <18 conceptions lead to abortion¹ / England 51.1%
- Total abortion rate 15-44 19.2/1000¹ / England 16.7/1000
- 27.2% of <25s have had a previous abortion¹ / England 26.5%
- Total prescribed LARC (excl. injections) 30.8/1000¹ / England 48.2/1000

Between April 2015 and March 2016 TH Public Health commissioned a range of Enhanced Sexual Health Services (LES) in TH community pharmacies with the aim of:

- Improving access to Emergency Hormonal Contraception (EHC), contraception and sexual health advice
- Increasing screening rates for Chlamydia, Gonorrhoea and HIV, and access to treatment of asymptomatic Chlamydia
- Increasing the uptake of the C Card condom distribution scheme, and increasing condom use in young people <25

Following PGD, safeguarding training, and a refresh of the pathways into LARC, 45/48 (93.8%) TH community pharmacies:

- Provided free EHC (Levonogestrel) under PGD to women (>13 years; resident in the borough) at risk of an unwanted pregnancy (unprotected sex or failed protected sex within the last 72 hours)
- Offered contraceptive advice, and signposting to sexual health and family planning services, with the aim of increasing LARC uptake
- Provided free self-sampled STI testing for Chlamydia, Gonorrhoea and HIV
- Offered treatment under PGD to asymptomatic Chlamydia positive indexes (aged 15-24) screened in pharmacy, and their contacts (>15 years)

METHOD

The study undertook an analysis of the self-sampled STI tests taken via The Doctor's Laboratory (TDL) kits and EHC consultations documented via PharmOutcomes, to identify women who had received EHC via a community pharmacy between April 2015 and March 2016

A corresponding search of GUM EPR was undertaken to establish any subsequent attendances at GUM/CaSH for LARC during, or within 6/12, of the study period

RESULTS

- 37/45 pharmacies (82.2%) undertook 6,553 EHC consultations
- Fraser competency was assessed in 100% of <16s (13)
- 6,522 (99.5%) Levonorgestrel (1500 microgram) doses were dispensed
- Mean age 26.7 years; range 13-59
- 4,668 (71.2%) of women requesting EHC had used it previously
- 93 (1.4%) had used EHC previously 'within the current cycle'
- 1,149 (17.5%) of women accepted the offer of an STI test kit as part of their EHC consultation

Figure 1: EHC Services Provided in TH Community Pharmacies Apr 15-Mar 16

- 325 self-sample kits (28.3%) were returned to TDL and processed

- 20 (6.2%) had >1 attendance for EHC in the study period
- 324 (99.7%) of these women provided a urine sample of Dual NAATs CT/GC testing – 19 (5.9%) CT positive infections identified
- 313 (96.3%) provided an oral swab for HIV testing – no HIV positives were identified

Figure 2: Outcomes from EHC Attendance in TH Community Pharmacies Apr 15-Mar 16

Outcome Type

- 16 (4.9%) subsequently attended GUM/CaSH services for LARC within 3-6 months of pharmacy contact for EHC
- 8 (2.5%) for implant; 4 (1.2%) for injectable; 4 (1.2%) for IUD fitting

DISCUSSION

- TH community pharmacies continue to provide the local population with an acceptable setting for self-sampled STI testing (both CT/GC and HIV)
- Pharmacy delivered EHC and signposting to LARC services in primary and secondary care is feasible although uptake needs improving
- There were limitations in the ability to gather data regarding the number of women accessing LARC in primary and secondary care following contact with pharmacy, the data presented may under report the actual numbers of those accessing LARC following pharmacy contact
- Online booking systems should be accessible to pharmacists to facilitate LARC referral
- Further work looking at the acceptability of this strategy should be conducted

REFERENCES: ¹ <http://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile/sexualhealth/data#page/0/gid/8000057/pat/6/par/E12000007/ati/102/are/E09000030/iid/90742/age/1/sex/4>