



Closure Event to mark the successful completion of the iSIMPATHY project

The iSIMPATHY closure event was held in Edinburgh on March 7th, to celebrate the many successes of the collaborative project in developing medicines reviews to improve care for patients prescribed multiple medicines. Over 6000 medicine reviews were delivered to patients over the course of the €3,112,034, 3.5 year EU funded project.

The event heard how the work developed by iSIMPATHY may also have helped avoid hospital admissions, with patients being moved to more appropriate medication regimens.



Pic: iSIMPATHY project team including the leads from the three countries and the pharmacists

Maree Todd MSP, Minister for Public Health, Women's Health and Sport, Scottish Government, said she looks forward to learning from the full evaluation this coming summer:

“This project looked at some of our most vulnerable patients taking more than five medications. The reviews have avoided adverse combinations of drugs and hospitalisations while also reducing prescriptions and drugs costs. We will know more when the full evaluation is published in June, we will work with partners to see how we can these improvements can be applied more widely, potentially saving lives and money.”

The iSIMPATHY project reports that medicines reviews are also particularly cost-effective because immediate interventions can allow patients to come off medicines they no longer require, helping avoid medicines waste.

The findings show how embedding iSIMPATHY's approach could help to drive change and form a significant part of addressing this challenge within healthcare systems.

Following the launch of NHS Scotland's Climate Emergency and Sustainability Strategy, the Royal Pharmaceutical Society (RPS) welcomed the strategy and called for more action on medicines waste.

The organisation's Scottish director said education for patients and prescribers is essential, while restating RPS Scotland's call for supportive infrastructure to deliver realistic medicine.



The iSIMPATY medicines interaction project has been supported by around €3.1m since 2019, mainly through European Union funding, as well as input from the three countries' project partners.

The EU funding came as part of the INTERREG VA Programme, designed to enhance cross-border cooperation, promote reconciliation and create a more peaceful and prosperous society. This aims to address the economic and social problems which result from the existence of borders.

Northern Ireland Department of Health Chief Pharmaceutical Officer, Mrs Cathy Harrison said:

“I’m pleased to see the impact on patients and service users who have taken part in iSIMPATY who are at the heart of the project’s aim to ensure the best and most sustainable use of medicines.

iSIMPATY has achieved this through training pharmacists and other healthcare professionals to deliver medicine reviews and embed a shared approach to managing multiple medicines. Northern Ireland has been delighted to collaborate with our partner regions to build on the success of previous projects dedicated to improving medicine safety.”

Another staff and costing benefit highlighted is the downstream effect, such as preventable admissions to hospital, primary and social care settings – which may reduce the workforce pressures and costs associated with admissions.

The Republic of Ireland’s Health Minister, Stephen Donnelly, said the partners and multidisciplinary teams were essential to good outcomes for patients in this joint project:

“Medicines are the most common healthcare intervention used within the health system, and the use of the right medicine for the right patient at the right time is central to this.

In the delivery of this project, pharmacists were strategically and ideally placed as medicines experts within a multidisciplinary team framework working to maximise therapeutic outcomes for optimal patient benefit.”

Project funding is managed by the Special EU Programmes Body, whose CEO, Gina McIntyre, praised the work of iSIMPATY in emphasising the importance of cross-border cooperation in delivering efficient health services.

She said this plays a major role in delivering good health services in the border regions while addressing the challenges of **“a constrained budget environment” and rising demand, adding:**

“Health is an important precondition for economic growth, while also fostering social cohesion. I am delighted to see just how effective this project has been in improving the lives of people in the region.”



Pic: Gina McIntyre speaking at the Closure Event.

Project Highlights

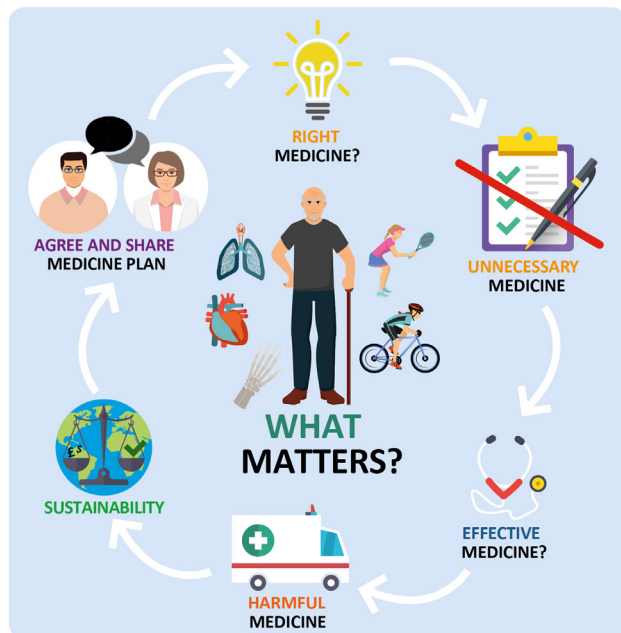
Delivery

Clinical pharmacists worked in GP practices, in-patient and out-patient hospital services. They delivered holistic person-centred medicines reviews with over 6,000 patients using the 7-Steps methodology. This supports patients in shared decision making and improves their understanding, in addition to optimising medicines to improve outcomes.



Pictured: iSIMPATY Pharmacists

7 STEPS TO APPROPRIATE POLYPHARMACY



Training and shared learning opportunities supported both project pharmacists and multidisciplinary teams in the delivery of the project. In addition, over 200 other healthcare professionals were trained. This facilitated and embedded cross border collaboration and adoption.

Interim results

Interim results show that the interventions used over the 3.5 year project have potentially prevented major organ failure and adverse drug reactions.

iSIMPATY is one of the most impactful changes in General Practice in 20 years.
(GP, Ireland)

Individuals reviewed had an average age of 72, 53% were female and they had an average of 6 co-morbidities.

During the review, 2 standard interventions related to patient education and medicine reconciliation were undertaken. An average of 9 additional interventions, such as drug changes and monitoring, were made. Of these, 82% were rated as clinically significant.

There was an average reduction of 1 drug, from 12 to 11. Reduction of drugs is not always appropriate, however, in 91% of reviews patients were rated as placed onto a more appropriate medication regime.

Before my medication review I suffered badly with heavy legs and wheezing, which stopped me doing a lot of things I wanted to do. After just a few small changes to my tablets I'm now out walking for 30 minutes every morning.
(Patient, Ireland)

Project Highlights Cont'd Impact and Sustainability

A full economic evaluation of the project is forthcoming. Evidence to date estimates £120 per patient per annum is saved on medicines expenditure for each medicine review undertaken in Scotland and €376 in Ireland. There are expected to be additional savings due to preventable admissions to hospital or healthcare contacts.



The project approach has been well received across disciplines in each jurisdiction, with work underway to sustain and spread the approach.

"iSIMPATHY reviews are very useful on ward rounds ... so a recommendation on a particular condition might make me consider a different avenue for investigation or treatment, which only leads to improvement in overall care of the patient... It is a fantastic service, with the time to delve further into patient history and to have real discussions with the patient" (Consultant, Scotland)

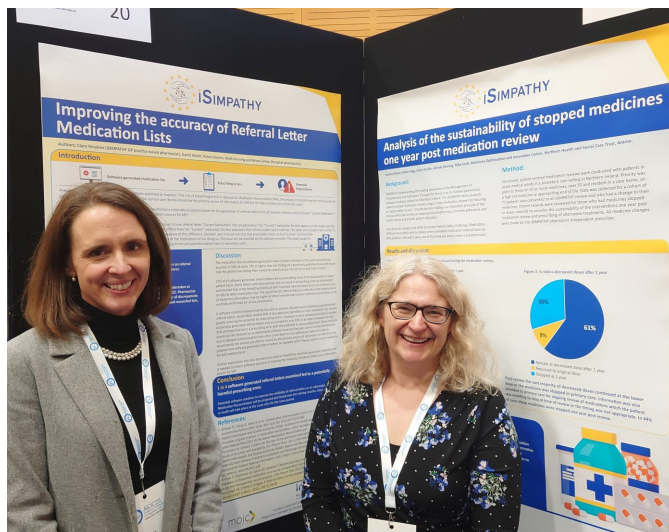
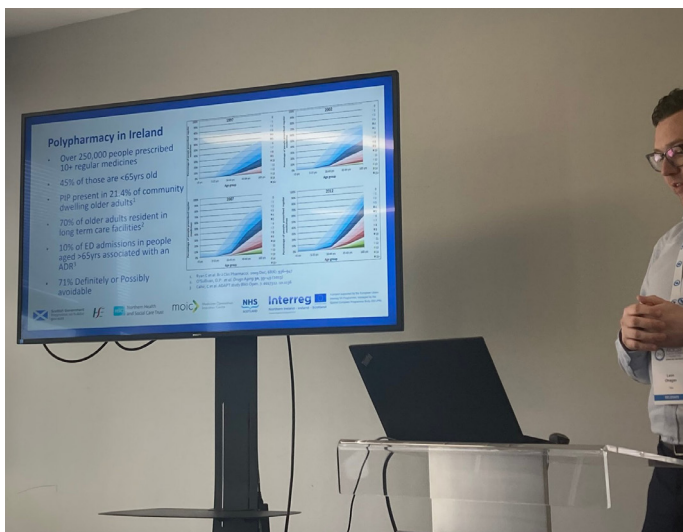
Accredited online training is available through NHS Education for Scotland which will support the project's lasting impact. iSIMPATHY has also contributed to the updating of Polypharmacy Guidance and resources including the Manage Meds app.

Find out more, and access iSIMPATHY resources and training at www.isimpathy.eu

A full evaluation will be published in August 2023.

Other News:

Some of our project pharmacists had the opportunity to present their work at the All Ireland Conference on Integrated Care (AICIC) in Dublin this month on behalf of the iSIMPATHY consortium. Leon O'Hagan presented "Integrated Learning – The iSIMPATHY Project" to the gathered participants while Emma Coyle highlighted the project experiences from working as an iSIMPATHY pharmacist in a GP Practice in Ireland.



Poster presentations included:

- Reducing Risk of Prescribing Errors on Admission to Hospital
- Analysis of the sustainability of stopped medicines one year post medication review
- Application of iSIMPATHY person-centred medication review process to Critical Care Step-down

The project will have a presence at the International Conference on Integrated Care (ICIC23) in Antwerp, Belgium in May 23 – so look out for us!

Undergraduate training in Northern Ireland

For the 2nd year running the iSIMPATY pharmacists in Northern Ireland have provided iSIMPATY 7-steps based workshops to the final year undergraduate pharmacy students in both of NI pharmacy schools. These have been very well received by the students and staff of the universities.



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
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NHS
SCOTLAND



Northern Health
and Social Care Trust



Medicines Optimisation Innovation Centre

Interreg 
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