Summary Care Records (SCRs) – A Guide for Junior Doctors

What Are Summary Care Records?

SCRs are electronic individual patient records generated in primary care by GP surgeries that contain, principally, information about prescribed medication. Most will also contain information about drug allergies and some may also contain information about other adverse reactions to medicines. In the near future, SCRs may also contain diagnostic information including investigative results. The SCR contains extremely useful information that secondary care clinicians need when clerking in a patient and when undertaking medicines reconciliation.

Currently, secondary care medicines are not added to SCRs by default, (unless subsequently prescribed by the GP), and clinicians outside of primary care only have “read only” access so cannot add to the information contained. Unfortunately, this means that specialist secondary care drugs such as long-acting antipsychotic injections and clozapine often do not appear in the record. Secondary care clinicians need to contact the patient’s GP and request that such items be added so that the record is comprehensive.

Do All Patients Have A Summary Care Record?

SCRs are in place for the majority of patients, but not for all as some choose to opt out of their details being held on the national database. SCRs are available for both adults and children.

Who Can Access Summary Care Records?

Clinicians in both primary and secondary care can access SCRs using an NHS Smartcard, once set up on the national system. However, they must only access them if directly involved in the care of the patient in question and if access to the information is necessary and will help to optimise the care of the patient.

In theory, clinicians should ask the patient’s permission every time they require access to their SCR or, if gaining permission is not practical or possible, they may make a “best interests” decision to do so. Each individual visit to the system is recorded centrally and the “permissions route” must be recorded.

Because there is often difficulty in gaining patient consent in mental health settings, the Trust is currently looking to establish an “opt out” system so that patients in contact with our services are informed that SCR access will occur by default unless they specify that it may not, (unless a best interest decision needs to be made). However, this development is not yet in place.

How Do I Gain Access To Summary Care Records?

Information on how to obtain an NHS smartcard, needed to gain access to SCRs, and on how to use a smartcard obtained from a previous trust, is available via the following link:

http://susi.sussexpartnership.nhs.uk/security-guidance/access/smartcards

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