



New study to help improve antibiotic prescribing in out-of-hours services

A multidisciplinary research team from the **Universities of Southampton, Bristol, University College London and University of Oxford** have been funded by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) School for Primary Care Research to undertake a 2.5 year study to explore antibiotic prescribing out of hours.

The overuse and misuse of antibiotics in primary care is of increasing national and global concern due to the increasing risk of antimicrobial resistance (when bacteria becomes resistant to treatments). Most research in primary care has so far focused on GP prescribing during usual surgery hours. However there is evidence that antibiotic prescribing is increasing out of hours.

The study will explore how communication patterns between patients and out-of-hours practitioners, such as GPs, nurses, pharmacists and paramedics, influence antibiotic prescribing in cases of common infections. The research will be used to optimise communication training to guide healthcare practitioners in best prescribing practices.

With the help of NHS patients and staff, the researchers aim to record 300 routine out of hours health care encounters, including telephone calls, primary care centre visits and home visits, in organisations serving over two million people across the South and West of England.

[Professor Geraldine Leydon](#) from the Academic Primary Care and Population Sciences Unit at the University of Southampton and Dr Rebecca Barnes from the [Centre for Academic Primary Care](#) at the University of Bristol who are leading the study said:

"We are very excited to be working with out-of-hours service providers across the South and West of England to improve the quality of antibiotic prescribing. In the UK, the NHS has invested in improvement through public health campaigns, clinical guidelines for treatment of common infections and local monitoring of numbers of antibiotics prescribed. This study takes a new approach in an under-researched setting and will make an important contribution in the drive to reduce unnecessary antibiotic prescribing and tackle antimicrobial resistance."





The work builds on previous research including the [UNITE study](#) which identified key barriers and enablers to optimal prescribing Out Of Hours.

This study involves an exciting collaboration with colleagues across SPCR:

Dr Catherine Woods, University of Southampton
Dr Fiona Stevenson, University College London
Dr Gail Hayward, Oxford University
Dr Mathew Booker, Bristol University
Dr Beth Stuart, University of Southampton
Dr Karen Postle, PPI
Prof. Michael Moore, University of Southampton
Prof. Paul Little, University of Southampton
Prof. Sue Latter, University of Southampton
Together with two organisations providing OOH services.

Further information

The National Institute for Health Research (NIHR): improving the health and wealth of the nation through research.

Established by the Department of Health and Social Care, the NIHR:

- funds high quality research to improve health
- trains and supports health researchers
- provides world-class research facilities
- works with the life sciences industry and charities to benefit all
- involves patients and the public at every step

For further information, visit the NIHR [website](#).

PCPS: Led by [Professor Michael Moore](#), the Academic Unit of Primary Care and Population Sciences (PCPS) research activity falls into [six themed](#) fields of inquiry. One such theme focuses on improving the targeted prescribing of antibiotics for common infections and finding alternative means of managing them, with a growing focus on the centrality of communication. You can see more on the [Antibiotic](#) and [Communication](#) research themes by clicking the hyperlinks.

For further information on PCPS, please visit our Primary Care [website](#) and our Academic Unit overview [website](#).

