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Prescribing Antibiotics? *App*-solutely no problem...

An app has been developed to ensure that medical staff are only ever a tap of the finger away from knowing the best, safest antibiotic drug to prescribe.

Pharmacy staff at Western Sussex Hospitals NHS Trust have worked with an app developer to produce a programme which allows colleagues instant access to the right guidelines, dosages, and advice.

Getting antibiotic prescribing right is a growing priority for health services around the world, with the growing threat that infections are becoming resistant to treatment.

Before now, medical staff needing to prescribe antibiotics to hospital patients would need to leave the bedside and go to a computer to make sure they were writing a prescription for the right drug, in the right amount.

Now, however, they can get all the information they need from their mobile phone, without leaving their patient.

Another big advantage of the app is that the Trust's prescribing guidelines for antibiotics used to be updated once a year. Now, as soon as any change is made the new information is instantly 'pushed' out to the users of the app, ensuring they are always using the most up to date information.

The Trust has always had expert pharmacists to monitor the prescribing of their clinical colleagues, but the new app means that staff always have the information they need, right in the palm of their hand, and can access more details immediately.

Such apps have recently begun to be used at a small number of teaching hospitals but the Western Sussex version is the first to be used outside those University Trusts. The Trust is also the first to use the new 'second generation' version of the app which allows prescribers to download different guidelines depending on which Trust they work at.

Sue Taylor, antimicrobial pharmacist, said: "With the continued rise in antimicrobial resistance, these drugs are becoming increasingly precious – we must take the utmost care only to use them when it is right to do so, and to only use the most appropriate medicine for each individual patient.

"This app gives our prescribers the very latest, evidence-based information, right at their fingertips – that helps them to get their decisions right, and strengthens patient safety."

Sam Coombes, a pharmacy technician who has been heavily involved in the development of the app, added: "'By embracing the smart phone revolution we have been able to support our clinicians with instant access to up to date guidelines – this is a really positive use of new technology."

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