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“ Now I will stop using my intuition and only follow checklists” - healthcare professionals’ experiences with drug utilization reviews

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Background & Aim: Inappropriate drug use is assumed to explain 5-15% of unplanned hospital admissions in elderly people. Interventions to reduce inappropriate drug use have shown inconclusive results.

The aim of the present study was to describe general practitioners (GPs) and nurses’ experiences with drug utilization reviews (DURs) in elderly patients.

Method: This was a qualitative study based on material collected during an educational intervention directed to GPs and nurses working in 33 general practices in Stockholm, Sweden. The intervention consisted of two lectures within four months during the year 2013. It comprised theoretical knowledge on inappropriate drug use according to National guidelines, feedback on prescribing, and the development of a local consensus procedure on how to work with DURs. The tutors, two pharmacists, documented GPs’ and nurses’ quotes after each lecture as well as their own reflections in an unstructured format. The material was explored using thematic analysis.

Results: Healthcare professionals perceived the work with DURs as complicated and challenging in many ways. Five themes could be identified.

1. Complexity in 3 ”P” (Patients, primary care, pharmacology);
2. Uncertainties and questionmarks;
3. The dead soul of a GP;
4. Guidelines versus clinical practice; and
5. Eureka! New experiences with DURs.

Conclusions: Health care professionals working in primary care described many challenges in connection with the performance of DURs in elderly patients. It is important to consider their experiences when designing future educational interventions in the field of inappropriate drug use.