



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

News Release

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Prescription tests for new doctors seek to improve patient welfare

New doctors are being put to the test in the first national assessment of their prescribing skills.

The test – developed at the University of Edinburgh – aims to improve patient welfare by ensuring that new doctors leave medical school with basic competency in the safe and effective use of medicines.

The initiative was launched in response to research that revealed up to one in ten NHS prescriptions written by newly graduated doctors contain errors. It has been led jointly by the British Pharmacological Society and the UK Medical Schools Council.

More than 7000 medical students from all of the UK's medical schools sat the online test last year. From 2015, medical students from nine schools – including the University of Edinburgh – will be required to pass the test in order to graduate.

The test could also help to ensure that doctors who have trained overseas meet a minimum prescribing standard before they begin working in the NHS.

Writing prescriptions is one of the greatest challenges doctors face. They have to select the correct drug, dose, route and frequency of administration, sometimes in the face of an uncertain diagnosis.

They also have to factor in how the drug will affect other illnesses the patient has and how it might interact with other medications the patient is already taking.

The online test is also being adopted by medical schools in other countries. Details of the test are outlined in *The Lancet* journal.

Professor Simon Maxwell, of the University of Edinburgh, said: “Writing accurate prescriptions is a fundamental part of being a doctor, with far-reaching consequences for patient outcomes. All doctors, whether trained in the UK or overseas, should be able to demonstrate a basic prescribing standard before they can work in the NHS.”

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