



National Prescribing Service Limited

Reviewing your prescribing for asthma using prescribing data from Medical Director®

Introduction

A review of your prescribing can be a useful process to improve overall management of your patients with asthma. The process for using the Medical Director® patient search facility to identify asthma patients via their medication is detailed below. General points for prescribing review and specific action points for some patients are also included for consideration. For further discussion of these points refer to NPS News 23 and PPR 19.

Although Medical Director has a search tool for retrieving a list of patients with asthma (see Appendix), this only identifies patients with 'asthma' as a recorded condition. This list will therefore be incomplete if 'conditions' are not routinely recorded on the system. In addition further searching within this group for specific medications is not possible.

Remember:

- Your prescribing records may not include patients who purchase salbutamol inhalers directly from a pharmacy without a prescription.
- Patients taking 'anti-asthmatic' medication for other conditions (e.g. chronic obstructive pulmonary disease) will need to be excluded.
- To find information on variation in dosage over time, check the records of individual patients and refer to past prescriptions or progress notes.

Identifying and reviewing patients with asthma.

Search A Identification and review of patients prescribed inhaled corticosteroids.

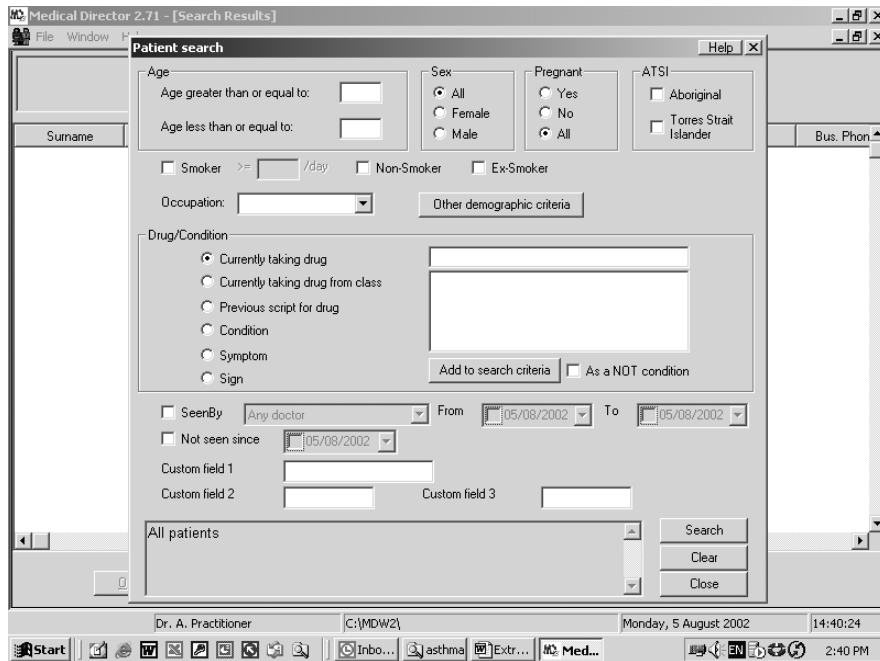
Search B Identification of patients using long-acting beta₂-agonists without an inhaled corticosteroid.

Search C Review of the use of fixed-dose combination products (inhaled corticosteroid + long-acting beta₂-agonist).

The instructions refer to parts of the 'Patient search' screen (Figure 1). Access this by clicking on the 'Search' menu, then selecting 'databases' from the list.

If you make a mistake at any time click 'Clear' and start again.

Figure 1: 'Patient search' screen.



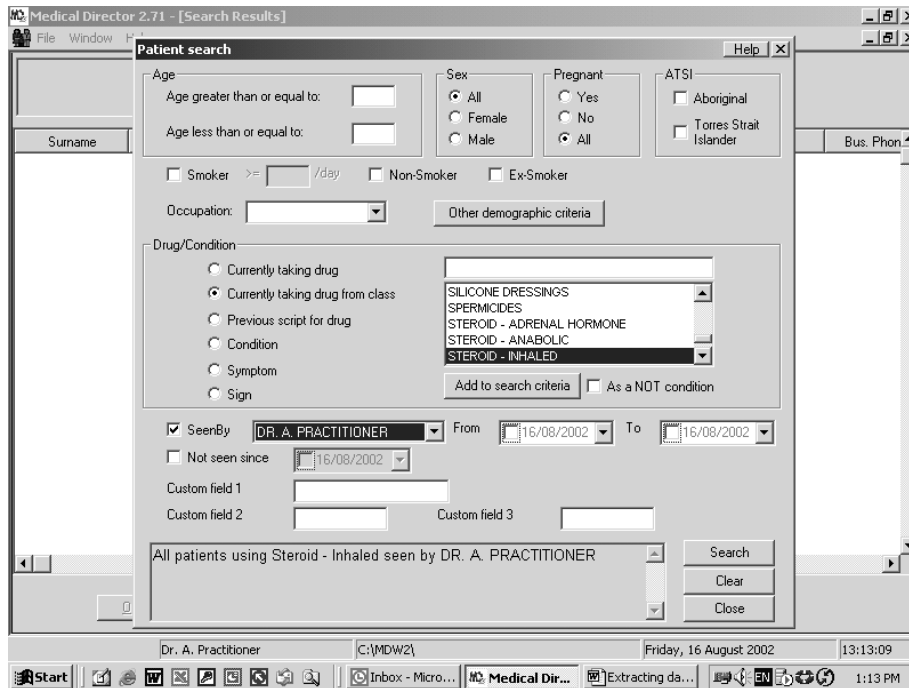
Search A

Identification and review of patients prescribed inhaled corticosteroids.

Rationale: This search will identify the majority of patients managed for asthma. Exceptions are those with very mild asthma and children using sodium cromoglycate or nedocromil as first line preventative therapy. Patients using inhaled corticosteroids for conditions other than asthma will need to be excluded.

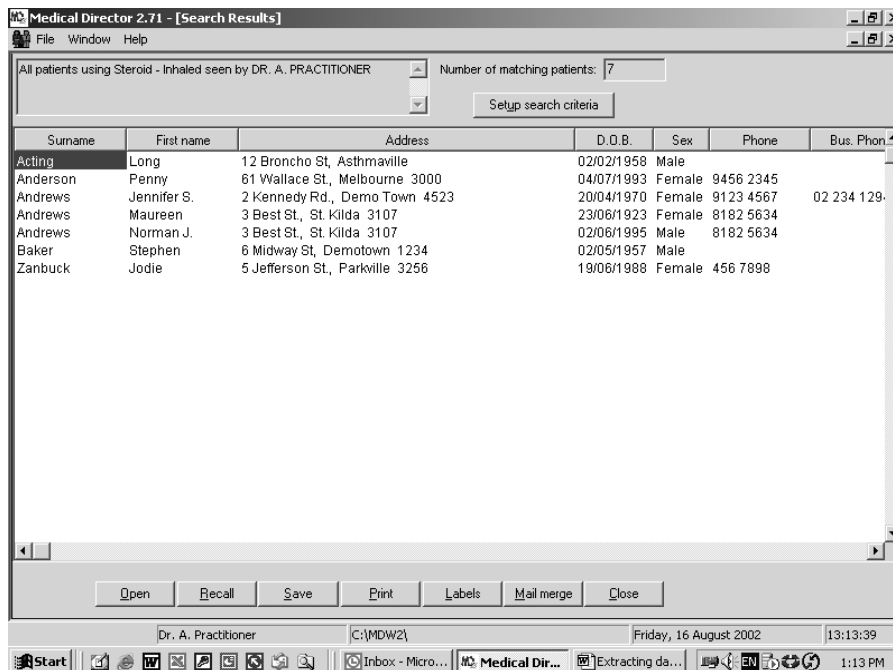
1. Select 'Currently taking drug from class' and type 'steroid' in the text box. From the drop-down list, select 'STERIOD – INHALED'. Click 'Add to search criteria'.
2. The text box at the bottom of the window should now read "All patients using Steroid - Inhaled".
3. Check the box next to 'SeenBy', and select your name from the drop-down list. The text box at the bottom should now read "All patients using Steroid - Inhaled seen by [YOUR NAME]". See Figure 2.

Figure 2: All patients using Steroid - Inhaled seen by [YOUR NAME].



4. Click 'Search' to view the list of patients using inhaled corticosteroids (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Search results.



5. Double click on a patient name in the list to review that patient's medication and medical record. This will include details of the medication history including the current and previous daily doses of inhaled corticosteroid* and all asthma related clinical notes.

* NPS PPR 19 contains a table showing asthma severity and suggested daily dose of inhaled corticosteroid, which you may find helpful. Calculate the daily dose used by multiplying the number of actuations or 'puffs' per day by the dose per actuation.

Points for prescribing review:

- Is the daily dose of inhaled corticosteroid reviewed frequently to ensure control of asthma is maintained?
- Has back-titration of the daily dose been attempted following 3-6 month periods of stability, especially where high daily doses used?
- Are you monitoring for adverse effects of inhaled corticosteroids? (e.g. glaucoma, dysphonia).
- Is the patient using other drugs that may affect asthma control? (e.g. beta blockers, aspirin, NSAIDs).
- Does the patient have a written asthma action plan? Have you worked through the 6-step asthma management plan?
- Have you assessed the severity of asthma?
- How do you monitor asthma control? How often?
- Do you know how much over-the-counter salbutamol your patients use?
- Is nebuliser delivery of bronchodilators used only when an MDI plus spacer would not be effective e.g. life-threatening asthma?
- Has the patient's compliance with therapy been checked by prescription count or other objective measure?
- Do you regularly check your patient's technique for use of devices by observation?

Action point:

- Record asthma as a condition in the past history of all asthma patients identified. Patients will then be identifiable by the asthma search tool (Appendix A).

Search B

Identification of patients using long-acting beta₂-agonists without an inhaled corticosteroid.

Rationale: Long-acting beta₂-agonists should always be used in combination with an inhaled corticosteroid.

1. Select 'Currently taking drug' and type in 'formoterol'. Click 'Add to search criteria'.
2. Select 'Currently taking drug' and type in 'salmeterol'. Click 'Add to search criteria'.
3. Click the check box 'As a NOT condition'. Select 'Currently taking drug from class' and type in 'steroid'. From the list, select 'STEROID – INHALED'. Click 'Add to search criteria'.
4. Check the 'SeenBy' box and select your name from the drop-down list.
5. The text box at the bottom of screen should now read – "All patients using formoterol and salmeterol not using Steroid - Inhaled seen by [YOUR NAME]".
6. Click 'Search' button to view results.

Action point:

- Target any patients identified by this search for a review of their medication. Long-acting beta₂-agonists should always be used in combination with an inhaled corticosteroid.

Search C

Review of the use of fixed-dose combination products (inhaled corticosteroid + long-acting beta₂-agonist).

Rationale: fixed dose combination products should not be prescribed as initial therapy.

There is only one combination product currently available i.e. Seretide®.

1. Select 'Currently taking drug' and type in 'Seretide'. Click 'Add to search criteria'.
2. Check the 'SeenBy' box and select your name from the drop-down list.
3. Click the 'Search' button to view patients who are taking Seretide®.

Action: Open each patient record and review the progress notes and/or your patient notes to check that they were previously using separate long-acting beta₂-agonist and inhaled corticosteroid products.

Points for prescribing review:

- Was the combination product used to initiate preventer therapy?
- Is the daily dose of inhaled corticosteroid reviewed and titrated when appropriate?

Appendix

Identifying patients with asthma using the asthma search tool

The built-in 'Asthma search', in the 'Search' menu (Figure A) will find all patients (or patients within a specific age range) who have asthma recorded as a condition in their 'Past History'. The completeness of this search can be improved by ensuring that all patients diagnosed with asthma have asthma recorded as a condition.

Note: Although there is a check-box for including only those patients with an active condition, this method assumes that you have used the coded terms for asthma when recording a diagnosis, or when specifying a 'reason for prescribing'. Therefore it may not be complete.

Figure A: Asthma search tool.

