

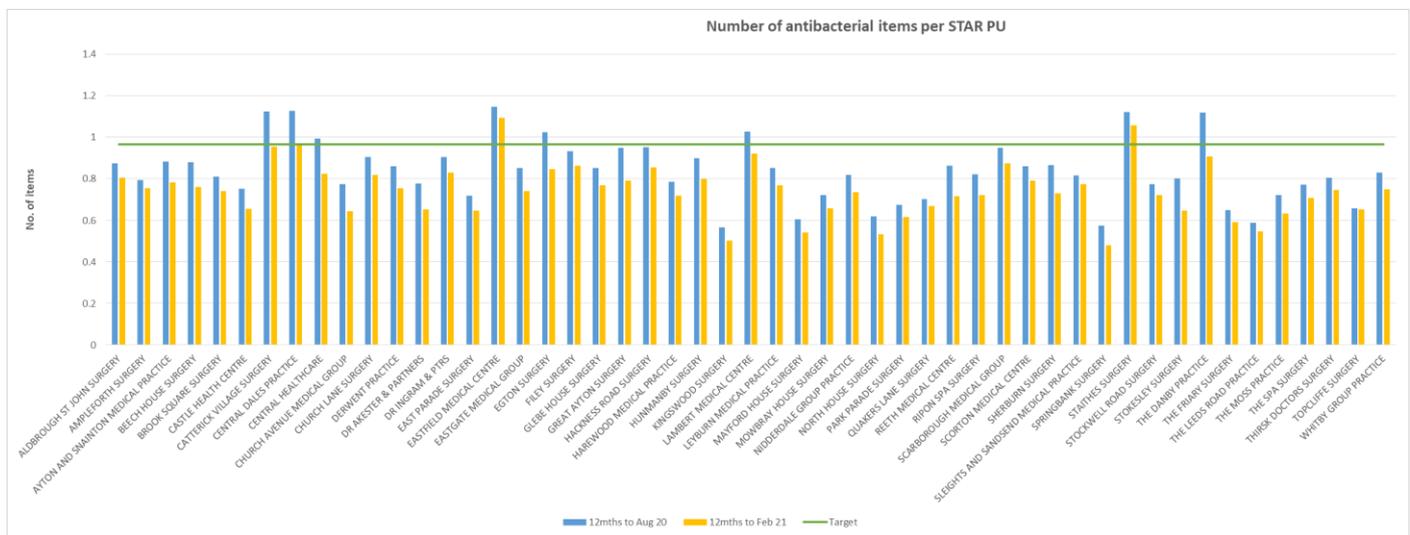
Medicines Management Prescribing Focus – May 2021

Antimicrobial Stewardship: Focus on Cefalexin

This month, we are asking all practices to review their cefalexin prescribing, as we have noted an increase in prescribing of this broad spectrum antibiotic in recent months.

During the last year the COVID-19 pandemic has presented many additional challenges for practice teams in managing patients with suspected infections. However, following an initial spike in March 2020, across the UK antibiotic prescribing has been significantly lower than in previous years. Practices in our area are showing similar overall reductions, as shown in the graph below.

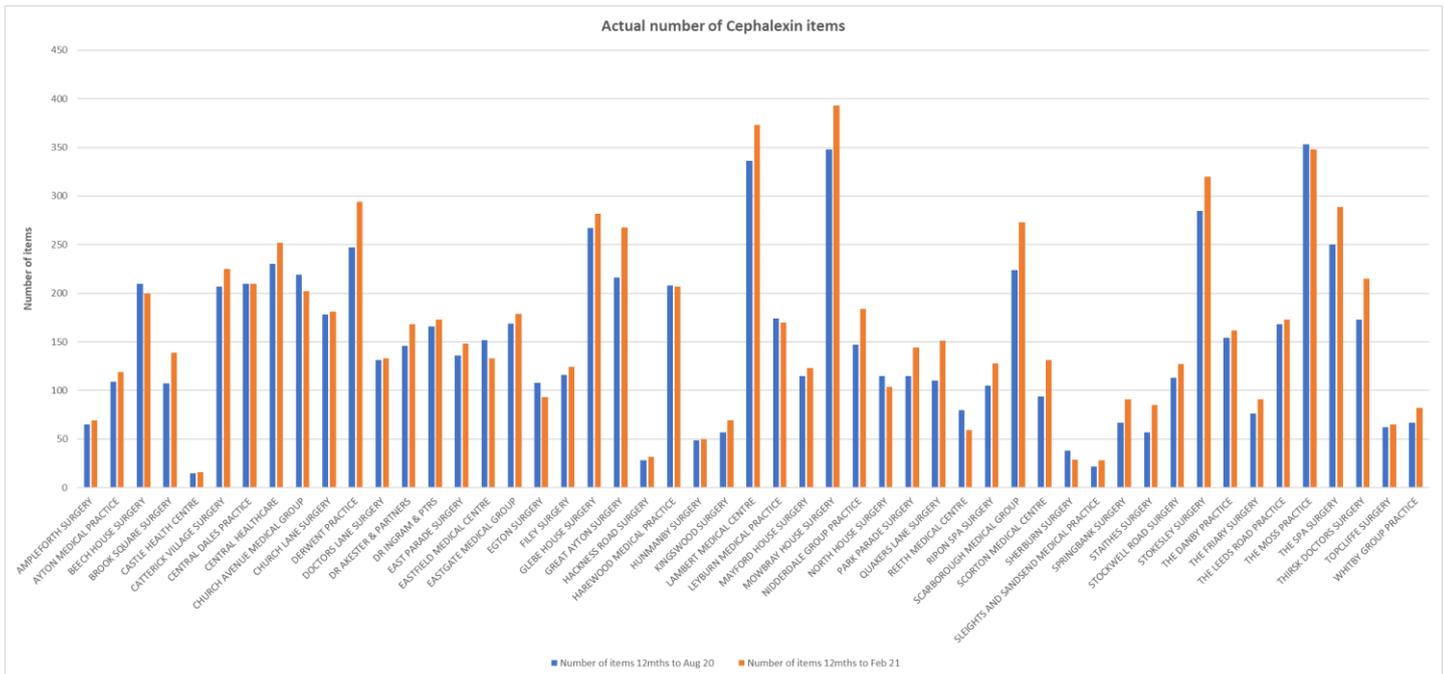
The graph shows the total number of antibacterial items per STAR-PU prescribed by each practice within the CCG for the 12 months to February 2021 (yellow bar) as compared to the 12 months to August 2020 (blue bar). The green horizontal line on the chart represents the NHS England target of practices being under 0.965 items per STAR-PU. (Source: ePACT2)



It is encouraging to see that all except three practices (Eastfield, Staithe's and Central Dales) are now below the NHSE target. Particularly for these remaining practices with prescribing rates above the target line, this is an ideal opportunity to discuss and review antimicrobial prescribing with all prescribers in the surgery. Good practice amongst the team can be shared and team discussions may encourage prescribers to reflect on how they can reduce the number of antibiotic scripts issued.

The second NHSE indicator for antibiotic prescribing in primary care is for the percentage of broad spectrum antibiotics to be below 10% of the total number of all antibiotics prescribed. Many practices in the CCG are showing an upward trend in their proportion of broad spectrum antibiotic prescribing during this time period. Unfortunately, this cannot be explained solely by a reduction in total prescribing making the proportion of broad spectrum prescribing appear higher. The upward trend is driven predominantly by an increase in cefalexin prescribing, as shown in the graph on the next page. Prescribing rates of co-amoxiclav and ciprofloxacin have remained consistent during the last 12 months.

The following graph shows the number of cefalexin items prescribed by each practice within the CCG for the 12 months to February 2021 (orange bar) as compared to the 12 months to August 2020 (blue bar). As this graph shows the actual number of scripts, rather than a prescribing rate, it cannot be used to compare one practice to another. (Source: ePACT2)



Some practices have issued significantly more cephalexin scripts during the most recent time period shown. There may be many potential reasons for this increase during the unprecedented times we are working in, but it is of concern as cephalexin is a useful oral agent for treatment of pyelonephritis and for UTI in pregnancy.

We would ask that all practices review their recent cephalexin prescribing, ideally using one of the available audit tools such as those published by the Royal College of GPs on the 'TARGET' website:

<https://www.rcgp.org.uk/clinical-and-research/resources/toolkits/amr/target-antibiotics-toolkit/uti-resource-suite.aspx>

We would also urge all practice staff (this includes non-clinical staff) to consider signing up as an antibiotic guardian if they have not already done so. This campaign was launched to promote collective action from both healthcare professionals and members of the public to work together to attempt to slow the spread of antibiotic resistance:

<https://antibioticguardian.com/>

Please share the information in this letter with all members of staff in the practice.

Yours sincerely,

The Medicines Management Team