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SWLSTG Pharmacy services develop ground-breaking phone app for safe Lithium treatment

Pharmacy services at South West London and St George's Mental Health NHS Trust (SWLSTG) have developed a ground-breaking phone app that will help with prescribing and administering lithium.

In the UK, lithium carbonate (often referred to as lithium) is the medication most commonly used to treat bipolar disorder. For lithium to be effective, the dosage must be strictly administered, and patients need to have their lithium blood level checked every 3 months, their kidney and thyroid function checked every 6 months and attend a full annual health check with their healthcare provider. Patients can only receive a supply of lithium from a hospital or community pharmacy if they can show evidence of an up to date blood level result.

Prescription of lithium has traditionally been recorded in a paper booklet, but research by the Pharmacy team found that patients wanted the option of recording this information in an electronic format, leading to the development of the app.

The app has been developed with the support of Bipolar UK members, and will:

- Record lithium treatment & levels
- Set health check reminders using the calendar function
- Record health check results at recommended intervals
- Record mood and sleep using the diary function
- Email GP or Specialist prescriber test results
- Store emergency information & contacts
- Have a learning section with frequently asked questions, Dos and Don'ts and a section on side effects

The app is:

- Free to download
- Password protected
- Will have no in-app purchases
- Available for Apple and Android devices for use in the UK

Dee Evans, Pharmacist at the Trust said:

“This has been a very exciting project to be part of. I hope that all those who download the app will find it a really useful addition to their mental health wellbeing by allowing easy recording of vital test results, setting reminders for

forthcoming test dates and recording quality of their sleep and moods which can be used to guide discussions with their healthcare team. Of course, it can also be used as a handy source of information about their medicine available at their fingertips.

“We also want to hear from other organisations in the NHS, charities or the private sector who would like to work collaboratively with us on this app. We have developed a framework that can be easily expanded, and which we hope will be of use to organisations out there wanting to develop something similar or for other medicine groups”.

Funding for the development of the app was provided by South West London Academic, Health and Social Care system and mobile technology developer Incentivated were chosen to create the app.

Incentivated had previous experience and knowledge of the health sector which proved invaluable.

Jonathan Bass, Managing Director at Incentivated, said:

“Although the app is focused on Lithium management, the wider aim of it is to develop a framework which can be adapted for use for a wide range of medicines. This will help patients and health teams administer other medicine prescriptions as well and will be a useful tool for other healthcare Trusts with similar needs or for further development and enhancement.”

ENDS

For more media enquiries please contact Media Relations Manager Alia Carter on 020 3513 5972 or email Alia.carter@swlstg-tr.nhs.uk

Notes to Editors

- For more information on Bipolar disorder and treatments, including Lithium please see the NHS Choices website: <http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Bipolar-disorder/Pages/Treatment.aspx>
- For more information on the mobile technology developer Incentivated please see their website www.incentivated.com
- South West London and St George’s Mental Health NHS Trust (SWLSTG) provides hospital inpatient and outpatient services, social care, community-based services and support to people in their own homes, and services the London boroughs of Wandsworth, Kingston, Richmond, Sutton and Merton.

- The Trust operates from many locations around south west London and has three main inpatient services.
- The Trust also provides a range of national specialist services.
- SWLSTG is applying to become a Foundation Trust. Further information about how to become a member is available at http://www.swlstg-tr.nhs.uk/about-us/get_involved/our_foundation_trust_application/
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