

3.5.1 Genetic profiling to inform therapeutic decisions in primary care – a qualitative meta-synthesis of barriers and enablers

Lay summary

Genetics is the science of understanding how we inherit characteristics through our genes. It has a growing place in modern medicine, both in the diagnosis and treatment of disease. The genetic make-up of an individual can indicate if it is safe to give them certain drugs or these drugs will work in this individual. In this way it is possible to help doctors improve their prescribing. This area of genetics is called pharmacogenomics. This is beginning to happen in certain specialist areas, such as cancer care. However, many important long-term health conditions are managed in general practice rather than specialist settings, and the use of genetics is unfamiliar to most GPs.

The purpose of this review is to find out what factors are preventing pharmacogenomics being used more widely in general practice, and what else might help to overcome such barriers. We plan to do this by reviewing scientific papers which have asked health professionals, patients, policy makers and the wider public about their views on this use of genetics to help guide prescribing of drugs to patients. We will then analyse the papers and summarise these different views. This will be important for helping us to understand how we can best use genetics to guide decisions about the use of medicines in general practice.