

PRESS RELEASE

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Saving the NHS requires re-think on self care, say experts

A new resource pack provides GPs and commissioners tools for implementing a self care strategy to save the NHS

London, UK, 9th October, 2013

In order to save the NHS for future generations, a multi-disciplinary expert group has launched a resource pack to help general practitioners and Commissioners adopt a cohesive self care strategy*.* Issued by the Self Care Forum, the *Save our NHS: Time for Action on Self Care* mandate provides a self care action plan for the NHS, supplemented with a ‘How to’ guide.

Dr Beth-McCarron Nash, General Practitioner Committee negotiator, GP at Lander Medical Practice, Truro, Cornwall, and Self Care Forum Board member, warns that changing current practice is essential: “We see over 300 million general practice consultations in England alone, so we need to stop burying our heads in the sand. This isn’t a problem that’s going to go away and there are many things we need to do, which is why the Self Care Forum has come up with an action plan. We have to start addressing these issues now and, unless we empower patients to self care, then I don’t believe the NHS is sustainable.”

The *Save our NHS: Time for Action on Self Care* mandate advocates a whole systems approach across the NHS to empower patients to self care in a supportive environment. To enable this to happen in practice, a six-point blueprint has been developed.

Fellow Self Care Forum Board Member Dr Gill Jenkins is a self care aware GP in Whiteladies Health Centre, Clifton, Bristol. “From a clinical perspective, what this means is helping patients understand their condition and where they can access information so they can improve their own health literacy. For example, probably 20% of my time1 is spent seeing patients with minor ailments that could be managed with the help of the community pharmacist.”

As part of the ‘How to’ guide, the Self Care Forum has created a series of minor ailments factsheets to give patients the confidence in managing their common conditions for themselves.

Long-term conditions pose the greatest burden on the NHS, accounting for 70% of all the health and social care budget in England,2 and provides a key area where self care approaches can be encouraged. “Patients only see me for perhaps four or five hours a year and the rest of the time they’re in charge of their own health, their own medicines, their own disease. It boosts their self-esteem to be in control of their condition, but it also results in improved outcomes for patients – and the NHS – if patients manage their long-term conditions well,” adds Dr Jenkins.

Dr McCarron-Nash believes now is the right time for action on self care. “As commissioners we need to think about how we enable this to happen to deliver effective care. To enable the GP to have the time and the capacity to actually have that self care conversation in every consultation, I would like see self care incentivised.”

The Self Care Forum report *Save our NHS: Time for Action on Self Care* and accompanying ‘How to’ guide for GPs and Commissioners are available to download from the Self Care Forum website at <http://www.selfcareforum.org/resources/mandate/>. The ‘How to’ guide provides self care implementation tips and access to useful resources, such as the minor ailments factsheets, RCGP e-learning module on minor ailments and patient information on self care for use on surgery websites.

-ENDS-

The following Self Care Forum Board members are available for interview:

* Dr Beth McCarron-Nash, GP and General Practitioner Committee negotiator
* Dr Simon Fradd, GP Concordia Health
* Dr Michael Dixon, NHS Alliance

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Notes to Editors:

1) The Self Care Forum’s six-point action plan:

* Recognise that supporting self care can create capacity in general practice for longer consultations
* For all healthcare professionals to support self care behaviour at every contact
* Adopt a self care aware conversation in all consultations
* Implement the NHS Constitution at practice level to underpin support for self care
* Support Patient Participation Groups to implement the National Association of Patient Participation programme supporting self care for the practice population
* Encourage healthcare professionals to enable patients to self care by developing national and local incentive schemes.

2) To hear members of the Self Care Board express their views on the importance of implementing a self care strategy, please download their videos (.wmv format):

* Dr Beth McCarron-Nash, GP and General Practitioner Committee negotiator:

<https://mashhealth.egnyte.com/h-s/20131007/b36bd60b73804673>

* Dr Gill Jenkins, GP: <https://mashhealth.egnyte.com/hs/20131007/a6fd0474dc5444af>

**References:**

1. Pillay N, Tisman A, Kent T, Gregson J. The economic burden of minor ailments on the National Health Service (NHS) in the UK. SelfCare.2010;1:105–116.
2. Department of Health. Policy: Improving quality of life for people with long term conditions. March 2013. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/improving-quality-of-life-for-people-with-long-term-conditions>.