

PRESS RELEASE

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Empower patients to self care and help save the NHS, say experts

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

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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.

Nurses can play a pivotal role in encouraging patients to start taking control of their own health.

Dr Peter Carter, Chief Executive & General Secretary of the Royal College of Nursing, says: “Nurses are leading the way in empowering people to take care of themselves. More and more people are living for many years with long-term conditions. Many can live well by knowing how to manage their own health, and by knowing when they need to ask for help from doctors and nurses. We want to move towards a situation where patients know how to manage common ailments and their conditions and know what help is available when it is needed, so that expert health staff are able to support those in the greatest need.”

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 nurses can be instrumental in promoting self care. “Patients only see a nurse or GP for perhaps six hours a year and the rest of the time they’re self caring,” says Sara Richards, Specialist Primary Care Nurse and Local Nurse on the Slough Clinical Commissioning Group Governing Body. “Not only does it boost patients’ self-esteem to be in control of their condition, but it also improves their health if they manage their long-term conditions well.”

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:

* Sara Richards, Specialist Primary Care Nurse and Local Nurse on the Slough Clinical Commissioning Group Governing Body

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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>.