

PRESS RELEASE

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Effective self care is critical to help save our NHS, say experts

A new resource pack for GPs and commissioners promote pharmacy role in saving the NHS

through self care

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 primary care 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 forthe NHS that makes clear the role of pharmacy in managing common ailments and medicines adherence for those with long-term conditions.

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, supplemented by a ‘How to’ guide.

Pharmacy can play a pivotal role in encouraging patients to start taking control of their own health. Michael Holden, Chief Executive at the National Pharmacy Association, Self Care Forum Board member and Pharmacy Voice member says: “Support for self care is embedded in community pharmacy practice. The combination of accessibility, convenience and expertise makes pharmacies an ideal first port of call for advice on many common ailments.”

With 20% of a GP’s time spent tackling common ailments, such as back pain, indigestion and headaches,1 educating patients on how they can manage these common conditions with the help of community pharmacists can also help ease the burden on primary care.

To ensure patients receive consistent advice from healthcare professionals, Pharmacy Voice is developing self care pathways for pharmacy customers that are in line with the Self Care Forum’s common ailments Factsheets for use in consultations, which are being provided as part of the ‘How to’ guide for GPs and Commissioners.

Making patients aware of the real cost to the NHS for managing common ailments may also be necessary, suggests Dr McCarron-Nash. “It takes the average family 13 hours to earn the tax to pay for a GP consultation. You could argue that would be much better spent in a different way. A consultation with a community pharmacist provides all the expertise many common ailments patients need, and at no cost to the NHS.”

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 common 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:

* Michael Holden, Chief Executive at the National Pharmacy Association, Self Care Forum Board member and Pharmacy Voice member

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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.