

Part of a series of guides for pharmacists and pharmacy technicians

Guide to the use of the Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP) Self Care for Minor Ailments e-learning course



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Educational solutions for the NHS pharmacy workforce

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Welcome to this guide

The Centre for Pharmacy Postgraduate Education (CPPE) has developed this guide as part of a series of learning and support resources for minor ailments.

Learning with CPPE

About CPPE

The Centre for Pharmacy Postgraduate Education (CPPE) offers a wide range of learning opportunities in a variety of formats for pharmacy professionals from all sectors of practice. We are funded through the NHS Multi-professional Education and Training Fund from Health Education England to offer continuing professional development for all pharmacists and pharmacy technicians providing NHS services in England. For further information about our learning portfolio, visit: <http://www.cppe.ac.uk>

CPPE guides

We have developed a series of guides within our learning portfolio to advise you and support your learning in many different areas. Each guide covers a range of approaches to help you develop and apply key skills and techniques to your own practice.

Many of the guides provide toolkits to help you to document and plan your development, while others demonstrate pharmacy-specific situations to help you put your learning into context. Some of them recommend that you work with a mentor to support you in your development.

Our full portfolio of guides is online at: <http://www.cppe.ac.uk/guides>

About this guide for pharmacy professionals to the use of the RCGP self care for minor ailments e-learning course

The Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP) self care for minor ailments e-learning course was developed in partnership between the Proprietary Association of Great Britain (PAGB) and RCGP experts in self care, as part of a collaborative drive to promote self care and change the culture of dependency in the NHS. The course provides general practitioners (GPs) with the knowledge and skills to conduct a 'self care aware' consultation for patients with self-limiting minor ailments. The course also includes strategies for the whole primary care team to improve patient access to evidence-based information about minor ailments and enhance patient confidence in self care.

Background

Self care is about encouraging and empowering people to take care of their own health. By promoting this concept among patients and increasing awareness that there are alternatives to GP appointments, it is hoped that patients will be more likely to explore self care in the future, before making an unnecessary appointment with their GP.

A report published by Deloitte¹ in 2012 looked at the capacity and capability of general practice now and in the future. The report highlights the need for general practice to work differently to cope effectively with the increasing demands it faces. This is especially important now because demand is set to rise as people are living longer. If people are not equipped with the knowledge to look after their own health and the pattern of consultations remains unchanged, the report predicts that by 2035 there could be a total of 433 million GP consultations, of which 180 million would be for people aged 65 and over, nearly double the current number.

According to the report, general practices need to improve information for and communication with patients, and develop self care educational strategies to enable patients to take care of their own health.

The report suggests that healthcare professionals do not always encourage patients to self care, or provide them with enough information to make them feel empowered and confident to do so. As a result, patients will return to their GP for continued advice and support. Multiple interventions are often required to prompt patients to consider self care. The NHS needs to ensure that patients are consistently encouraged and informed about self care at every intervention, at every level of the NHS, in order to facilitate this behaviour change.

Relevance to pharmacy

Self care in the pharmacy context is about the pharmacist and pharmacy staff providing advice and support, to enable the public to get the maximum benefit from caring for themselves or their dependants.

Community pharmacies are ideally suited to support people with long-term conditions to self care, because:

- pharmacies are located where people live, shop and work in all communities, including the most deprived areas
- both well and unwell people frequently use pharmacies
- pharmacies provide the mainstay of advice for the general public on self care of minor ailments and are often the first port-of-call when a condition arises
- more products are being reclassified from prescription-only to pharmacy only medicines, providing pharmacists with an increasingly broad range of treatments to offer those seeking to self care, including medicines for the prevention of disease
- the degree of access that community pharmacy enjoys means that services aimed at supporting people to change their lifestyles, for example: smoking cessation, weight management and sexual health services, have an impact and reach when provided from a pharmacy setting, which is unrivalled in primary care
- pharmacies provide convenient locations for providing diagnostic and therapeutic monitoring services that help people to care for their own condition effectively
- pharmacy professionals can also support those who are self monitoring at home, with advice on both management of their condition and the quality control and interpretation of the testing process itself.

Purpose of this guide

The RCGP self care for minor ailments e-learning course is written primarily for GPs; however, it is recognised that it is essential for all healthcare professionals, including pharmacy, to be involved in the promotion of self care in order for widespread behaviour change among patients to take place. Pharmacy professionals are already comfortable with the management of minor ailments and supporting patients' choice of over-the-counter (OTC) medicines. Supporting self care fits well with this existing, holistic approach that pharmacy already takes to the care of patients.

The purpose of this *guide* is to:

- provide instructions for accessing and using the RCGP e-learning course
- support pharmacy professionals to gain the most from the course
- provide contextual information for pharmacy practice
- support pharmacists to promote self care of long term and acute conditions
- promote inter-professional working
- ensure that pharmacy professionals have parity in terms of access to learning in order to deliver similar self care messages as other healthcare professionals.

It is expected that this *guide* will be used by pharmacy professionals, in conjunction with the e-learning course.

To view video clips and animations in the e-learning course, you will need Adobe Flash Player installed on your computer. There is a link on the course menu screen to download this when you reach that stage.

Definitions

A **minor ailment** can be defined in many ways. In this course, it is considered a straightforward, common, usually self-limiting condition, which may require little or no medical intervention.

Self care is a part of daily living and can be defined as the care taken by individuals towards their own health and well-being. This includes the care extended to their children, family, friends and others in their neighbourhoods and local communities. Self care includes the actions individuals and carers take for themselves, their children and their families to stay fit and maintain good physical and mental health; meet social, emotional and psychological needs; prevent illness or accidents; care for minor ailments and long-term conditions; and maintain health and wellbeing after an acute illness or discharge from hospital (Department of Health, 2005).

Supporting self care is about working in partnership, in a process of two-way communication, negotiation and decision-making, in which the individual and the healthcare professional contribute to the care planning process to achieve the best possible outcomes; it is not about care professionals handing over responsibility to the patient (Skills for Health and Skills for Care, 2006).

A note about web links

Where we think it will be helpful we have provided the web links to take you directly to an article or specific part of a website. However, we are also aware that web links can change. A new website: <http://www.gov.uk/government> encompasses the Department of Health website, as well as the new executive agency, Public Health England. To search for any Department of Health publication or information mentioned in this programme either visit the [gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) home page and enter the title into the search facility, or search via Google or your preferred internet search provider. If you have difficulty in accessing any other web links, please go to the organisation's home page and use appropriate key words to search for the relevant item.

What this guide covers

This guide is divided into the following sections:

- **Accessing the RCGP self care for minor ailments e-learning course** page 7
- **Pre-course assessment** page 12
- **Why do people consult with minor ailments?** page 15
- **Principles of managing minor ailments** page 19
- **Improving your practice** page 21
- **Post-course assessment** page 22



Accessing the RCGP self care for minor ailments e-learning course

1. The RCGP e-learning courses can be found at:
<http://www.elearning.rcgp.org.uk/selfcare>

Self Care for Minor Ailments

Welcome to the RCGP online course: Self Care for Minor Ailments



This course equips practitioners with the knowledge and skills to conduct a 'self-care aware' consultation for patients with self-limiting minor ailments.

The course also includes strategies for the whole primary care team, to improve patient access to evidence-based information about minor ailments and to enhance patient confidence.

This course has been developed in partnership with the Proprietary Association of Great Britain (PAGB) and RCGP experts in self-care as part of collaborative drive to change the culture of dependency in the NHS.

[Start Self Care for Minor Ailments](#)

Time to complete this course: 2 hours

Date of publication: November 2011



2. Click 'Start *Self Care for Minor Ailments*'.

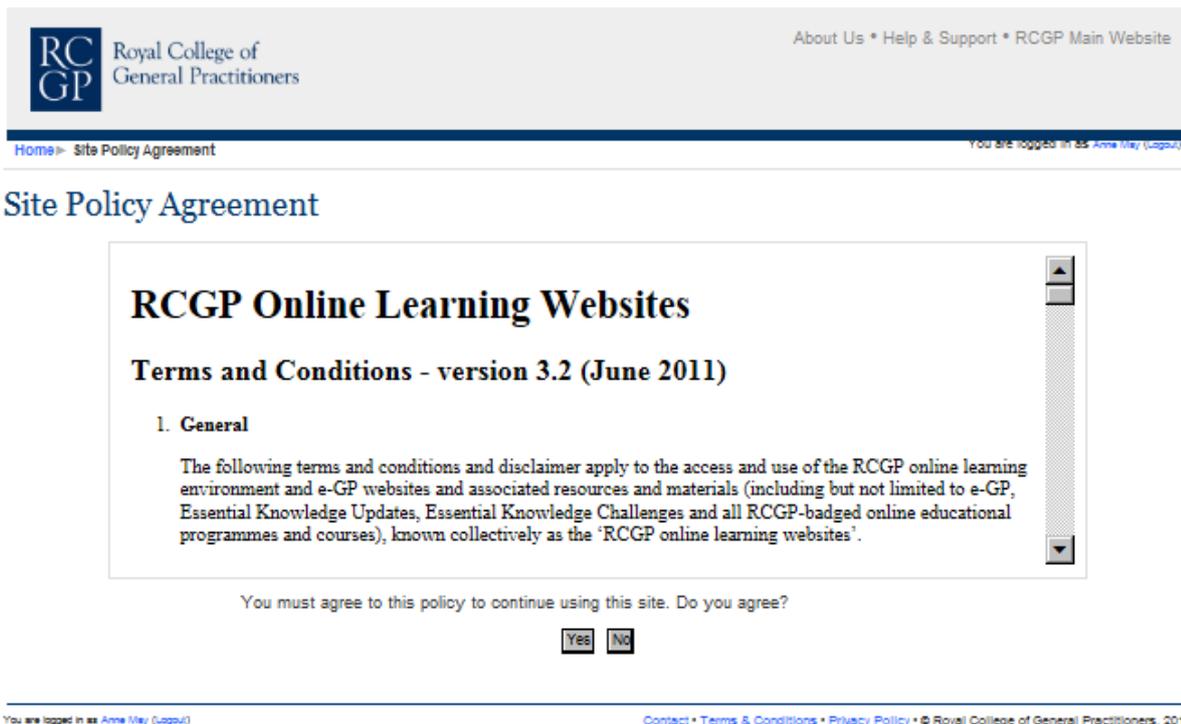
Registration

3. The first time you access the e-learning course you will need to register with the RCGP website for an e-learning account.

4. All healthcare professionals, trainees and students can register for a RCGP e-learning account, which provides free access to selected RCGP courses and updates. Select 'click here' under 'Register here for FREE access'.

RCGP Members, AITs and GP Foundation	Register here for FREE access
<p>If you are a RCGP Member, Fellow, Associate in Training or a member of the GP Foundation you are automatically registered and can login here with your email address and members' area password.</p>	<p>All healthcare professionals, trainees and students can register for a RCGP e-learning account, which provides FREE access to selected RCGP courses and updates. To register for your e-learning account, click here.</p>
<p>If you can't remember your registered email address, please click here.</p>	<p>Once you have registered, you will be able to access this site by entering your email address and password in the login box opposite.</p>
<p>(Cookies must be enabled in your browser) help?</p>	<p>If you have any problems with your registration please contact us at e-learning@rcgp.org.uk.</p>
<p>Email Address: <input type="text"/></p> <p>Password: <input type="password"/></p> <p><input type="button" value="LOGIN"/> clear</p>	
<p>Forgotten your password?</p>	
<p><input type="button" value="Yes, help me log in"/></p>	

5. Complete the registration details. Enter your GPhC number in place of the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) number.
6. When you have completed the form click 'Register' and you will receive an email confirming your login details.
7. Return to: <http://www.elearning.rcgp.org.uk/selfcare> and click 'Start Self Care for Minor Ailments'.
8. Enter your login details in the left-hand panel.
9. On the first occasion you follow this process you will be taken to a screen entitled 'Site policy agreement'.



The screenshot shows the RCGP website's 'Site Policy Agreement' page. At the top left is the RCGP logo and the text 'Royal College of General Practitioners'. At the top right are links for 'About Us', 'Help & Support', and 'RCGP Main Website'. Below the header, there is a breadcrumb trail 'Home > Site Policy Agreement' and a user login status 'You are logged in as Anne May (Logout)'. The main content area is titled 'RCGP Online Learning Websites' and 'Terms and Conditions - version 3.2 (June 2011)'. Under the heading '1. General', the text states: 'The following terms and conditions and disclaimer apply to the access and use of the RCGP online learning environment and e-GP websites and associated resources and materials (including but not limited to e-GP, Essential Knowledge Updates, Essential Knowledge Challenges and all RCGP-badged online educational programmes and courses), known collectively as the 'RCGP online learning websites'.'. Below this text is a question: 'You must agree to this policy to continue using this site. Do you agree?' with two buttons: 'Yes' and 'No'. At the bottom of the page, there is a footer with 'You are logged in as Anne May (Logout)' on the left and 'Contact • Terms & Conditions • Privacy Policy • © Royal College of General Practitioners, 2013' on the right.

10. Once you have agreed to the Site policy agreement you will be taken to the opening screen.

Topic outline

Self Care for Minor Ailments



This course equips practitioners with the knowledge and skills to conduct a 'self-care aware' consultation for patients with self-limiting minor ailments.

The course also includes strategies for the whole primary care team, to improve patient access to evidence-based information about minor ailments and to enhance patient confidence.

This course has been developed in partnership with the Proprietary Association of Great Britain (PAGB) and RCGP experts in self-care as part of collaborative drive to change the culture of dependency in the NHS.

 Self Care Forum



Time to complete course: 2 hours
Date of publication: November 2011

11. Now work your way through the course by clicking on the links towards the bottom of the screen, starting with the 'Pre-course assessment'.

Self Care for Minor Ailments

Work your way through the course by clicking on the links below.

To view the video clips and animations in this course, you will need Adobe Flash Player installed on your computer. Click [here](#) to download the latest version.

1. Pre-course Assessment

Please complete this short quiz before starting the learning sessions. It will allow you to check your understanding of the key topics before reviewing the material.

2. Why do People Consult with Minor Ailments?

Consider why patients attend with minor ailments, examine the context within which patients present and explore their common ideas and concerns.

3. Principles of Managing Minor Ailments

Review the principles of managing minor ailments, including explaining the likely trajectory of the illness and advising patients how to act if their symptoms deviate from this.

4. Improving Your Practice

Review the factors in your practice that may encourage or hinder self-care and consider practical tips on how team efforts to encourage self-care can be introduced and evaluated.

5. Post-course Assessment

Once you have completed the above learning sessions, please take this quiz to check your understanding of the key topics and to activate your e-Certificate.

[Course References](#)

[Acknowledgements](#)

Session 1

Pre-course assessment

The pre-course assessment consists of 23 questions that assess your knowledge, attitudes and decision-making skills.

The first section (Questions 1-16) prompts you to reflect on your own attitudes towards supporting patients with minor ailments to self care. You will have a chance to complete these questions again at the end of the course to compare your responses. There are no right or wrong answers to this section of questions.

The second section (Questions 17-23) consists of a series of clinical questions and is concerned with testing your knowledge. These questions will be scored and you will be able to revisit them again at the end of the course to compare your results.

Work through and answer all the questions. Although this e-learning course was written with GPs as the original intended audience and some of the questions in the pre-course assessment are GP specific, you can still reflect and respond from your own viewpoint as a pharmacy professional.

For example:

Question 3

This question asks you to rate how likely you are to use the internet to locate and share information with a patient during a consultation.

Consider your own practice situation; you may be involved in an over-the-counter patient consultation; a medicines use review (MUR); or you may be a non-medical prescriber.

The first answer option is: 'I do this every surgery'; if you do not run 'surgeries', substitute this with: 'I do this during every consultation'.

If you do not have internet access during your patient consultations choose answer 5 'I never do this' for this question.

Question 4

Similarly, the first answer option is: 'I do this every surgery'; which you can substitute with: 'I do this during every consultation'.

Question 5

You are asked to rate how likely you are to write a prescription for an over-the-counter medication. You can amend the question to reflect the pharmacy context and instead answer: 'How likely are you to *recommend* an OTC medication?'.

Question 8

This question asks you how important is it to address the reason why patients think their minor illness needs a GP opinion in a minor illness consultation.

To give this a pharmacy context imagine a situation where a patient consults you over the counter, describes a list of symptoms indicative of a minor ailment to you, and then says to you "I need to see my doctor don't I?" How important is it then to address the reason why the patient thinks they need a GP opinion?

Question 10

You are asked to consider how important it is to explore any self care approaches the patient has already considered *before* visiting the GP for a minor illness consultation.

In the pharmacy context this may be a conversation you have when a patient visits you for advice and/or to purchase an OTC medicine. This conversation offers you the opportunity to explore how far the patient is prepared to try self care before making an appointment with their GP. So the question in the pharmacy context would be: 'How important is it to explore the patient's self care behaviour during their visit to your pharmacy?'

Question 12

This question asks you to choose which options you would consider to be most important in the promotion of self care. Answer this question from the viewpoint of your local GP practice(s). It would be interesting to compare your answers to this question with the answer that your GPs would give, in order to promote cross professional working.

Question 14

Substitute 'Feedback from GPs' as the fifth answer option.

Question 15

Substitute 'To save NHS resources' as the fourth answer option.

Question 21

Substitute 'NHS 111' as the third answer option.

If you need to break off while completing the pre-course assessment you can click 'Save without submitting' at the bottom of the screen.

Once you are happy with your responses click 'Submit and finish'.

You will then receive a review of your answers to the pre-course assessment and a score. By scrolling through the review of answers you will find your score for each of the individual scoring questions and a summary of the correct answers.

When you have read through this screen click 'Finish review' at the bottom of the screen. You can then select 'Click here to go to the first lesson'.

Alternatively, if you would like to work through the questions again click 're-attempt quiz'.

Session 2

Why do people consult with minor ailments?

This lesson explores the reasons why a patient might seek help with a minor ailment. It examines the background context within which patients present and explores the ideas, concerns and expectations of patients with minor ailments who can be encouraged and supported to self care.

Objectives

After completing this lesson, you will be able to:

- define a minor ailment
- describe health-seeking behaviour and changes in the lay understanding of minor ailments
- identify the reasons for attendance, by exploring the patient's ideas, concerns and expectations
- clarify the importance of the context within which the patient presents and the social factors that influence their ability to self care
- develop strategies to encourage patients to self care and to conduct a 'self care aware' consultation.

Estimated time: 30 minutes

Work through the lesson by clicking on the forward button at the top or bottom of the screen:



You can view your progress with the lesson on the progress bar at the bottom of the screen:



Work through the first lesson, completing your responses in the spaces provided. When you reach the end of the lesson click 'Yes' to confirm you have completed it to activate your CPD certificate.

You can break off at any point during the lesson and return to complete it later.

Pharmacy context for this session

Your previous experiences

This screen looks at consultations and the doctor-patient relationship. In the pharmacy context you can think about patient consultations with pharmacy professionals that may occur over the counter in a community pharmacy, or in a pharmacy consultation room during an MUR or a new medicine service (NMS) appointment. Depending on your role there may be other occasions when you consult with patients, perhaps in a surgery or in a patient's home. As you work through this part of the course, think about the trust that the patient may have in your advice (in place of the 'doctor-patient' relationship).

Substitute 'pharmacy professionals' for 'GP' or 'GPs' or 'doctors', as appropriate.

Feedback

This screen discusses the findings of a study conducted by Ahluwalia, *et al* (2010) about the way GPs deal with situations involving patients coming to a consultation with information they have gathered from the internet.

In the pharmacy context how you might deal with this situation? Could you apply the techniques used by GPs in your discussions with patients?

Reasons for consultation – Common minor ailments

This screen contains examples of why people might consult a doctor or practice nurse for common minor ailments. You can read and listen (if you have speakers or headphones connected) to the patients' or carers' requests by clicking on each case.

Similar requests for advice about minor ailments may occur in pharmacy. We have reflected on each scenario below and made suggestions, as appropriate; although, you may well think of others.

- **Constipation**

Eric may be phoning the pharmacy for advice about his constipation as he is unable to leave his wife at home alone.

- **Dermatitis**

Katrina may be in your pharmacy describing and showing the rash on her wrist to you.

- **Hayfever**

Toby may equally be in your pharmacy requesting to buy an antihistamine over the counter.

- **Simple headache**

Consider this in the pharmacy context of paracetamol previously bought over the counter. Ewa is now asking whether she can use this during pregnancy.

- **Upper respiratory chest infection**

In the pharmacy context it is unlikely that a mother would ask for a pharmacy professional to listen to her baby's chest; however, she might ask you whether she needs to make a doctor's appointment.

Addressing attendance reasons

This screen discusses the range of reasons why patients may consult with a doctor about a minor ailment. Pharmacy professionals play a major role in helping to reduce unnecessary GP appointments for minor ailments by educating and signposting patients about self care. In most cases reassurance can be offered, but bear in mind that patients may also use a minor ailment as a precursor to discussing more worrying, sensitive or serious problems and it is essential that any such patients are signposted to their GPs. You may also contact the GP directly - with the patient's permission - depending on the situation and urgency.

Consultation

This screen provides an opportunity to read and view a GP consultation for lower back pain. As a pharmacy professional it is useful to have an awareness of the way GPs approach patient consultations for minor ailments.

Try to answer the question on the following screen.

Once you have submitted your answer you will see a 'Feedback' screen that highlights some relevant issues concerning the consultation. The next screen is a summary of 'Key points'.

End of lesson

Choose 'Yes' and 'Submit' on the next screen if you have completed this session. Then click 'continue' to review your responses to the Reflection points, make any amendments and then click submit once you are happy with them.

You then have the option to:

- print your responses to the reflection questions as a Word document
- go to Session 3
- return to the *Self Care for Minor Ailments* home screen.

Session 3

Principles of managing minor ailments

This lesson reviews the principles of managing minor ailments; a patient's reason for attending, addressing your and the patient's concerns about serious illness and using descriptions of the likely path of the illness to agree a shared management plan.

Objectives

After completing this lesson, you will be able to:

- describe the importance of explaining the natural history and trajectory of self-limiting conditions
- explain how the patient can manage their symptoms in the normal trajectory of the ailment - and how to act if the condition deviates from this
- identify red flag symptoms, or signs that indicate a potentially dangerous condition in minor ailments
- explain the need to address the reason for the patient's attendance and the techniques and skills required to successfully do so
- describe the features of phone/email consulting in comparison with face-to-face consulting that may influence the practitioner's decision to prescribe or to recommend self care measures.

Estimated time: 30 minutes

Pharmacy context for this session

Patient access to advice – Reflection points

How might your approach to over-the-counter healthcare advice for minor ailments influence the patient's subsequent expectations of their GP?

Consider what percentage of patient consultations in your pharmacy are not face-to-face, then consider your most recent five telephone consultations as described in the question.

Have you met with your local GPs to discuss your approach to patients with minor illness? Such a meeting may be helpful in establishing a common understanding and approach and encourage GPs to refer patients with minor illnesses to you to obtain over-the-counter medicines, thereby increasing the likelihood that the patient will consider this as their first option the next time they have a concern.

Scenario 1

Approach this scenario in the context of Mrs P calling into your pharmacy for an over-the-counter consultation and complete your responses to the further questions you would ask Mrs P.

Take a look at the Clinical Knowledge Summary 'Headache tension type' for more information: <http://www.cks.nhs.uk/headache-tension-type>

Scenario 2

Approach this scenario in the context of a telephone call from Mrs A to your pharmacy for advice. She is asking whether she should give paracetamol to her two-year-old child or if she should make an appointment to see the doctor.

Complete your responses to the further questions you would ask Mrs A. Then decide on the action you would take as a result of the additional information you are provided about the case.

- Would you sell paracetamol over the counter in this case?
- What would you advise Mrs A to do?
- Do you need to contact anyone else, if so, who and when?
- Reflect on how confident you feel in dealing with this type of case over the telephone.

Feedback (for Scenario 2)

Take a look at the Clinical Knowledge Summaries:

- 'Feverish children - risk assessment'
<http://www.cks.nhs.uk/feverish-children-risk-assessment>
and
- 'Feverish children – management'
<http://www.cks.nhs.uk/feverish-children-management>

The consultation so far

You are now given the opportunity to revisit the patient/GP consultation for lower back pain that you viewed and listened to in Session 2 (Why do people consult with minor ailments?) Once you have reminded yourself about part 1, listen to part 2 of the consultation where the GP encourages the patient in self management of the minor ailment.

Listen to the video clips and complete your responses to the questions on the next few screens in the boxes provided.

Session 4

Improving your practice

This lesson covers the processes in practice that may encourage or hinder self-treatment of minor ailments and how efforts to encourage self care might be introduced and evaluated.

Objectives

After completing this lesson, you will be able to:

- describe the impact on the NHS of managing minor ailments, including the direct and indirect costs and the effects on clinicians' time
- explain the techniques for encouraging patients to self care, including responsible use of OTC medication and stocking a home medicine cupboard
- analyse how aspects of your practice may inappropriately reinforce dependency
- describe the research that has been undertaken to identify effective ways of encouraging self care for minor ailments
- identify the ways to improve individual, team and organisational support for self care.

Estimated time: 30 minutes

Pharmacy context for this session

Promoting self care

Scenario

Reflect on how the doctor might have managed the consultation differently and why the doctor providing the out-of-hours care might have made different clinical decisions.

A significant event

The scenario shows Mr T's experience in trying to make an appointment with his GP. In your reflection points you could also consider how you could best work with your local GP practice(s) to encourage patients with minor illnesses to self care.

Auditing minor ailments

Have you audited minor ailments in your pharmacy? Working together with your local GP practice(s) you could use audit to see if the strategies you have implemented are working in practice and to identify any further areas for improvement. Reflect on the audit criteria you would include.

Minor ailments information

Are there any other common minor ailments that you see in your practice? Have you thought about running educational events for patients, in conjunction with your local GP practice(s)?

Session 5 Post-course assessment

When you reach the end of Session 4 and you have 'submitted' your answers you have the opportunity to return to the home screen of the 'Self Care for Minor Ailments' course to select 'Post-course assessment' to revisit the questions you completed in the pre-course assessment to check your understanding of the key topics. Please refer to the notes about the questions in Session 1 above (the numbering sequence is slightly different to the pre-course assessment, but the same notes apply).

Further learning

If you would like to learn more about how pharmacy can support and advise patients with minor ailments, then take a look at the CPPE learning below, via the CPPE website: <http://www.cppe.ac.uk>

- Open learning:
Minor ailments services: a starting point for pharmacists
(available for download)
- e-assessment:
Minor ailments: A clinical approach (2013)

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