

General Medical Council

Updating our expectations of newly qualified doctors in the UK: reviewing the Outcomes for graduates

Response from PAGB

10 January 2018

PAGB (Proprietary Association of Great Britain) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the General Medical Council (GMC) about *Outcomes for graduates* which set out what newly qualified doctors from UK medical schools must know and be able to do.

This response is from PAGB in the capacity of a trade association representing the consumer healthcare industry. The consumer healthcare industry in the UK offers people a range of solutions to self care for self-treatable conditions, such as pain relief, coughs, colds, and sore throats, gastrointestinal problems, skin treatments, hayfever and allergies, and eye and foot care.

PAGB welcomes the inclusion of new outcomes on self care into the *Outcomes for graduates*, both in relation to the newly qualified doctors' personal and professional lives. We have restricted our comments to these self care outcomes as this is where we feel we can most effectively contribute to your consultation.

It is very positive that the GMC has recognised the value of self care and the importance of including it in guidance covering what newly qualified doctors must know and be able to do.

PAGB believes much more needs to be done to effectively support people to self care and to embed self care behaviour into people's daily lives. All too often people seek advice and support from the wrong NHS services, increasing the burden on already overstretched GPs and A&E departments. We believe the GMC has an opportunity with the *Outcomes for graduates* to really embed self care as part of primary care in the minds of new doctors. PAGB welcomed the Royal College of GPs' 'three before GP' messages¹ published in December 2017, this is the kind of messaging we would like to see more of.

Our research suggests that there are 57 million GP appointments and 3.7 million visits to A&E a year for minor health concerns², which people could have treated with self care or sought advice from a pharmacist if they were unsure what to do. Changing this behaviour pattern will take a system-wide approach with support from across the medical profession.

Particularly in light of moves by many CCGs in England, and recent consultations by NHS England and NHS Clinical Commissioners, to restrict the prescribing of over-the-counter medicines for minor health concerns, it will be even more important for doctors to have a good understanding of how to support people to self care.

¹ Royal College of General Practitioners, December 2017 'three before GP'

<http://www.rcgp.org.uk/news/2017/december/3-before-gp-new-rcgp-mantra-to-help-combat-winter-pressures-in-general-practice.aspx>

² IMS Health, Minor ailment workload in general practice, 2007 <https://www.pagb.co.uk/content/uploads/2016/06/Driving-the-self-care-agenda-AndyTisman.pdf> and IMS Health study of self treatable conditions presenting in A&E units 2014 https://www.pagb.co.uk/content/uploads/2016/06/PAGB_AE_Executive_Summary_June-2015.pdf

3. Newly qualified doctors must demonstrate awareness of the importance of their personal wellbeing and incorporate self-care into their personal and professional life. They must be able to:

a) self-monitor, self-care and seek appropriate advice and support, including by being registered with a GP and engaging with them, to maintain their own physical and mental health and protect patients from any risk posed by their own health

PAGB fully supports the inclusion of self care into point 3 a in the *Outcomes for graduates* document. It is vital that doctors look after their own health and wellbeing to enable them to support their patients.

While this outcome rightly states that doctors should be registered with a GP, it is PAGB's view that this outcome puts too much emphasis on the GP's input. PAGB's definition of self care³ covers a spectrum of care from making healthy lifestyle choices and practicing good hygiene, through self care for minor health concerns, self management of long term conditions and mental wellbeing, much of which does not involve contact with a GP.

We would welcome the inclusion of the community pharmacist as a source of advice and support in this outcome. If newly qualified doctors see their local pharmacist as a source of support for themselves, they are more likely to recommend this to their patients as well.

6. The nature of illness is complex and therefore the health and care of many patients is complicated and uncertain. Newly qualified doctors must be able to recognise, manage and be comfortable with complexity and uncertainty, and seek support and help from colleagues where necessary. They must be able to:

c) demonstrate an understanding of the importance of working with patients, their relatives, carers or other advocates, in planning their care, negotiating and sharing information appropriately and supporting patient self-care

PAGB fully supports the inclusion of self care in this point (6 c in *Outcomes for graduates* document).

PAGB research in 2016 found that although 92% of people said it was important to look after their own health to ease the burden on the NHS; when they felt unwell 34% of people⁴ said the GP would be the first port of call. There seems to be a disconnect between people's understanding of how health services should be used, their stated good intentions and what they actually do when they feel unwell.

In these instances where people have sought medical help unnecessarily, it will be important for newly qualified doctors to have the skills and confidence to support people to self care and to explain that the symptoms they are experiencing could be managed with self care. It may, therefore, also be helpful to reference self care in outcome 12, which outlines the skills newly qualified doctors must have to carry out a consultation with a patient.

PAGB supports the Self Care Forum, a charity which works to promote self care and embed it into every day life. The Self Care Forum has found that often people don't understand how long minor health concerns should last and are therefore giving up on self care too early. For example,

³ What is self care? P4 of PAGB's policy document on a national strategy for self care

<https://www.pagb.co.uk/content/uploads/2017/05/PAGB-calls-for-a-self-care-strategy.pdf>

⁴ PAGB, Self Care Nation report. Survey of 5,011 UK adults. Published November 2016 <https://www.pagb.co.uk/latest-news/report-self-care-nation-self-care-attitudes-behaviours-uk/>

people seeking medical help after experiencing a cold for three days, without realising that the usual duration of the common cold is seven to 10 days. The Self Care Forum has produced a range of fact sheets⁵ to help doctors talk through the normal symptoms and duration of self treatable conditions, with details of red flags for when medical attention should be sought. These fact sheets are a useful resource for doctors to advise and support people to self care.

To further support doctors in talking to their patients about self care, PAGB has called for the introduction of “recommendation prescription” pads for doctors to recommend an over-the-counter medicine where that is the most appropriate treatment. In Germany, a similar scheme has been very effective. The Grüne Rezept (Green Prescription) is a prescription pad on which doctors can recommend an OTC medicine to their patient. Research conducted by BAH, the German Medicines Manufacturers Association, in November 2016 found that when people were given a green prescription by their doctor, 87% purchased the recommended medicine from a pharmacy and 4% purchased the recommended medicine from an online pharmacy. Only 6% said they did not purchase the medicine and 3% couldn’t remember. BAH also found that people remembered the doctor’s recommendation and the next time they experienced the same symptoms they went directly to the pharmacy without visiting the GP first.

Other points in *Outcomes for graduates* where self care should be included

We believe there are a number of other areas in the *Outcomes for graduates* document where reference could and should be made to self care. These are as follows:

In point 2 on professional and ethical responsibilities, PAGB would recommend the inclusion of self care in point h, in relation to person-centred care and in point l in relation to the bullet points on giving information about options for treatment and care and supporting and facilitating patients to make decisions about their treatment and care.

In point 8 on education and training, PAGB would recommend inclusion of the requirement for newly qualified doctors to be able to encourage and empower people to self care.

In point 25 d on management of common diseases, PAGB would recommend the inclusion of self care and the ability of newly qualified doctors to recommend and encourage self care, with the advice of a pharmacist if necessary, for the management of minor health concerns.

In point 28 on health promotion and illness prevention, PAGB would recommend the inclusion of self care in relation to point a on wellbeing and wellness and promoting lifestyle change and in point i in relation to nutrition and health.

Taking this opportunity to add additional references to self care in relation to these relevant points in the *Outcomes for graduates* document will help embed self care as part of primary care into people, and doctors, daily lives.

PAGB believes it is important to stress that self care does not mean no care. People self care for their own and their family’s health on a seven days a week, 52 weeks a year basis. The use of health services needs to be promoted as a way of augmenting and supporting self care decisions and we welcome the recognition that supporting self care needs to be a key skill for newly qualified doctors.

⁵ Self Care Forum fact sheets <http://www.selfcareforum.org/fact-sheets/>



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10 January 2018

About PAGB

PAGB (Proprietary Association of Great Britain) is the UK trade association which represents the manufacturers of branded over-the-counter medicines, self care medical devices and food supplements. For more information about PAGB and its member companies, please see:

<https://www.pagb.co.uk/about-us/>

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