

The context for a National Minor Ailment Programme

PAGB and PSNC have joined forces on the issue of minor ailment management as we have a shared belief that the time is now right for the implementation of a National Minor Ailment Programme.

Every year, costs increase for the NHS and it becomes ever more over-stretched. Rising levels of obesity, and associated diseases, puts immense demands on NHS resources, and there are projections that these demands will become overwhelming. The access that pharmacy provides to the whole population, rather than just those that are ill, is a real asset that the NHS should continue to capitalise on.

The government recognises these challenges and is aiming for wider reform to transform the NHS into a 21st century healthcare service. In his speech on the National Health Service (7 January 2008), Gordon Brown said: "The NHS of the future will be one of patient power, patients engaged and taking greater control over their own health and their healthcare too" and that "Growing expectations about choice, access, and convenience in healthcare are a fact of modern life."

The National Minor Ailment Programme would fit this vision.

In the 60th anniversary year of the NHS, Lord Darzi's NHS Review document is set to be published (in June 2008) which will set us on the path to the next stage of the NHS's transformation. When the review was announced, the Secretary of State for Health, Alan Johnson, called this "a once in a generation opportunity to ensure that a properly resourced NHS is clinically led, patient-centred and locally accountable."

One of the review's objectives is to ensure that there is more accessible and convenient care integrated across primary and secondary providers, reflecting best value for money and offering services in the most appropriate settings for patients. For this to be successful, primary care needs to release capacity and commissioning should complement this and our campaign does that.

The recent consultation on the Pharmacy White Paper has also provided us with an excellent opportunity to propose such a programme and promote the benefits of building capacity in pharmacy. A joint submission has been made by PAGB / PSNC, which calls for a National Minor Ailment Programme to be included in the White Paper.

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