



Self Care in Practice - A New Movement Newsletter

Welcome to the first edition of the Self Care in Practice Newsletter.

This newsletter will be supporting the movement from launch to success, we hope to use it as the vehicle for sharing information and best practice of self care for minor ailments as well as enabling you to join the debate.

Self care is not a new phenomenon, it is simply that the skills have been lost over the last sixty years while the population has moved its focus to the NHS. People have become ever more dependent on the NHS and in particular the GP, to cure all their health problems.

It is time for a paradigm shift towards self care. It's time for people to re-learn those forgotten skills and understand what and when they can help themselves and when they should seek help from a doctor.

Join in the debate by subscribing to this newsletter. Show your support for the movement by emailing libby.whittaker@pagb.co.uk or calling on 020 7421 9318.

What is Self Care?

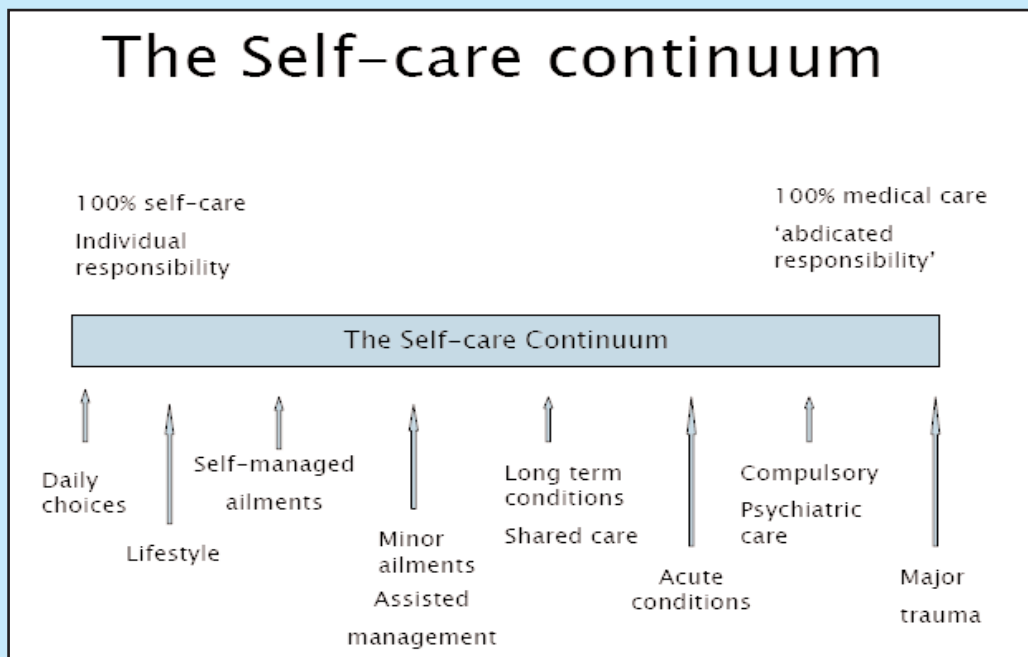
While the meaning of self care may be different for different people, the definition below has been adopted by DH in *Self care - A real choice. Self care support - a practical option.*

- ♦self care is part of daily living
- ♦self care covers the actions people can take to stay as healthy as possible and reduce the risk of developing new conditions
- ♦it includes the skills and tools that people might use in self-management of their existing symptoms and health conditions - such as problem solving, decision making, taking action to improve their health
- ♦it also considers activities taught or supported by health and social care professionals
- ♦if they are caring for others or have dependents, they may enable or help those people to look after their own health too.



The Self Care Continuum

In defining self care, Dr Pete Smith from NAPC devised the self care continuum where self care represents the 'default position' on the continuum. This continuum places pure self care - everyday choices like brushing teeth, washing hands, exercising - at one end, and pure medical care at the other, where responsibility is abdicated to professionals when faced with compulsory psychiatric care and major trauma. However, for those surviving major trauma the self care continuum kicks back in again, with daily choices, etc.



Time to End this GP Dependency Culture - Sign Up to our Self Care in Practice Movement

It's time to take radical action to end the culture of GP dependency and equip people to take a much more active role in dealing with their minor ailments urges a new Self Care Movement. Latest research conducted by IMS Health, reveals that the treatment of minor ailments costs the NHS

around £2billion per year and accounts for over an hour a day on average for every GP.

This call for action, hot on the heels of the Government's recent anti antibiotic campaign 'Get Well Soon', comes from the Self Care in Practice Movement that is



already widely supported by healthcare professionals across primary care and the PAGB. Self Care in Practice wants to see healthcare professionals work towards achieving a real shift in attitude away from "doctor knows best" to "what can I do to help myself" when it comes to everyday minor ailments.

Professor Mike Pringle from the University of Nottingham explains: "We know from research that patients are ready and willing to take more responsibility for managing their own health but they need better information and more reassurance that they are doing the right thing. Self care does not mean no care - it means empowering individuals to make an informed choice and giving them access to and advice on the different courses of action they can take."

General practice is perfectly placed to take the lead role in ensuring that healthcare professionals can effectively inform patients and the new movement is backing up its call for action with carefully targeted tangible support.

Dr Paul Stillman, A GP in Sussex added "It's frustrating that while nine out of ten people are prepared to initially treat minor ailments

themselves the vast majority give up on their treatments in favour of a GP consultation. This is very often because they just don't understand that most minor ailments will get better on their own without the need to see a doctor."

The PAGB is hosting a new dedicated area on its website www.pagb.co.uk/selfcare/movementforminorailments.html supporting Self Care in Practice which includes findings from the IMS research which they commissioned last year. As Gopa Mitra, Director of Health Policy and Public Affairs says, "PAGB is delighted to be a founding member of Self Care in Practice and over the next six weeks we will be promoting and sharing examples of best practice and case studies to help general practice break the cycle of GP dependency."

"There are real advantages for everyone if we can persuade people to take greater control over the management of their minor ailments. The use of prescriptions and antibiotics will reduce, GPs can spend more time on complex consultations and patients can treat themselves without delay. Upping the importance of the self care agenda is good for patients and good for health professionals," Dr Pete Smith, Vice President of the NAPC concluded.



If you too are convinced that helping individuals to break their cycle of GP dependency is the best way forward, then show your support and sign up for future editions of the Self care in Practice newsletter by emailing libby.whittaker@pagb.co.uk or telephone 020 7421 9318.

Facts about self care

- ❖ Nine out of ten common illnesses are treated by people themselves.
- ❖ 57 million GP consultations a year (200,000 consultations per day) involve minor ailment discussion, 90% of which (51.4 million) are for minor ailments alone, equating to, on average, an hour a day for every GP.
- ❖ 20% of the annual 290 million total GP consultations involve minor ailments and 18% of total GP consultations are for minor ailments only.
- ❖ 91% of minor ailment consultations result in a prescription being issued (52 million prescriptions per annum) at a cost of £370 million.
- ❖ £2 billion of NHS resource is allocated to minor ailment consultations (consultation & prescription costs), 90% of which (£1.8 billion) are for minor ailment only consultations.
- ❖ Over 75% of the cost for minor ailment consultations is attributable to the GP's time, equating to £1.5 billion.
- ❖ The top 10 minor ailments (listed below) are responsible for 75% of consultation costs and 85% of prescription costs, amounting to £1.62 billion.
 - ◆ back pain
 - ◆ dermatitis
 - ◆ heartburn and indigestion
 - ◆ nasal congestion
 - ◆ constipation
 - ◆ migraine
 - ◆ cough
 - ◆ acne
 - ◆ sprains and strains
 - ◆ headache

(For more facts on self care go to www.pagb.co.uk/information/selfcare.html).