

MEDIA RELEASE

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ALMOST HALF THE NATION WOULDN'T VISIT A PHARMACIST FOR ADVICE ON COMMON CONDITIONS LIKE A COLD

The majority (92 per cent¹) of the nation acknowledge the importance of people taking responsibility for their health to ease the NHS burden. Yet, almost half¹ (47 per cent) wouldn't visit a pharmacist first for advice on treating minor conditions like coughs and colds, and a third¹ (34 per cent) would head straight to their GP, a new report has found¹.

The Self Care Nation report¹ commissioned by PAGB for Self Care Week 2016 (14-20 November), explored the current attitudes of 5,011 UK adults towards self care and managing self-treatable conditions, without the need for a visit to the GP or A&E.

Of the 47 per cent of people surveyed who said they wouldn't visit their pharmacist in the first instance for advice or medication for a self-treatable condition, nearly one in five¹ (18 per cent) said they didn't think pharmacists were as qualified as GPs or hospital staff.

John Smith, Chief Executive of PAGB comments, "Our research highlights a need to support people in feeling more confident about visiting the pharmacy for advice on self-treatable conditions. With 11,500 community pharmacies in England² providing easy access to highly trained healthcare professionals without the need for an appointment, they are ideally placed to provide the advice people need while at the same time reducing pressures on stretched GP and A&E services."

Despite people visiting pharmacies regularly to pick up prescriptions, the research found that people aren't using the wider health services pharmacies can offer, such as flu jabs, health checks and advice on a wide range of over-the-counter medicines for self-treatable conditions.

Steve Riley, community and clinical pharmacist comments, "The findings from the research are worrying. It is clear more needs to be done to raise awareness of the skills and expertise that pharmacists have. Pharmacists go through a minimum of five years of training and are qualified to provide information on medicines and a wide range of health concerns. Many are trained to provide additional services, such as flu vaccinations. We also know when symptoms need to be assessed by a doctor

and will signpost people to other NHS services (e.g.GP, Out of Hours services or A&E) as needed.”

Encouragingly, the Self Care Nation report reveals that people accept and acknowledge the benefits of self care – both to themselves and the NHS. More than half¹ of those questioned agreed that buying an OTC medicine would be cheaper than paying £8.40 for a prescription and 69 per cent¹ agreed it was quicker to visit the pharmacy than wait for a GP appointment. People can access the advice and expertise of Pharmacist without an appointment. Pharmacists are also available in the late evenings and weekends too.

John Smith continued, “With GP and A&E services under increasing strain, empowering more people to self care, where appropriate, is more important than ever. However, we need to overcome the barriers to behaviour change through better education about the benefits of self care and ensuring people are consistently encouraged to take more responsibility for their health”.

The report found that as a nation we want to be doing our bit, with 82 per cent of those surveyed passionate about saving the NHS¹. When made aware of their ‘NHS Footprint’ and the cost of different health services four out of five said they would rethink which was the best service to use for a self-treatable condition¹.

Furthermore, when people were made aware of the personal cost of self care compared to the financial impact to the NHS, almost a third (29 per cent) who qualified for free prescriptions said they would be willing to purchase an OTC medicine for a self-treatable condition¹. Considering the NHS spent more than £83 million on prescribing 22.6 million packs of paracetamol in 2014³, shifts in behaviour like this could have a significant impact on the future sustainability of our healthcare system.

- ENDS -

Notes to editors:

There are an estimated 57 million GP consultations and 3.7 million visits to A&E for self-treatable conditions every year, costing the NHS an estimated £2.3 billion^{4,5}

PAGB defines Self Care as the actions people take for themselves and their families to promote and maintain good health and wellbeing and to take care of their self-treatable conditions. To read the report in full visit www.pagb.co.uk

PAGB (Proprietary Association of Great Britain) is the UK trade association representing manufacturers of branded over-the-counter medicines, self care medical devices and food supplements.

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1 Survey with 5,011 UK adults, carried out by Pure Profile on behalf of PAGB. Sept 2016.

2 <https://www.england.nhs.uk/commissioning/wp-content/uploads/sites/12/2015/11/quick-guid-comm-pharm-urgent-care.pdf>
[last accessed October 2016]

3 <http://www.pagb.co.uk/self-care/self-care-read/> [last accessed October 2016]

4 IMS Health, Minor ailment workload in general practice, 2007.

5 IMS Health study of self treatable conditions presenting in A&E units 2014. Data source: HES data. Health Episode Statistics. Re-used with the permission of the Health and Social Care Information Centre. All rights reserved.