



NHS IN GREATER LONDON LAUNCHES MAJOR CAMPAIGN TO REDUCE £50 MILLION MEDICINE WASTAGE

A campaign aimed at reducing an estimated £50 million wasted on medicines has been launched today by four Primary Care Trusts in Greater London. The campaign aims to raise awareness about correctly ordering repeat prescriptions and helping people get the best from their medicines.

The potential money wasted on medicines across Greater London, could pay for;

- **13,484 hip replacements**
- **16,892 knee replacements**
- **1,963 community nurses**
- **3,300 drug treatment courses for breast cancer**
- **50,000 more drug treatment courses for Alzheimer's**

GPs and pharmacists across Greater London have joined together in a bid to educate patients about their treatment and to help patients understand more about their medicines and the options they have. One of the main concerns is medicines on repeat prescriptions, which are ordered and collected by patients but are not used. It is estimated that £90 million worth of unused prescription medicines are retained in individuals' homes, across the UK, at any one time¹. Between 40-50% of patients do not take or use their medicines as prescribed. This can occur for a number of reasons, including:

- patients not believing the medicine is necessary;
- possible side effects;
- fitting taking or using medicines into daily routines;
- choosing between medicines if patients' feel they are taking too many, and;
- cutting down or stopping medicines they have been taking for a long time.

The campaign will consist of radio advertising together with posters and leaflets that will be displayed in pharmacies and GP practices to raise awareness of medicine waste among both patients and carers.

Further information may also be found on a new national website www.medicinewaste.com

Nick Beavon, Chief Pharmacist of NHS Wandsworth said: "Everyone involved in prescribing, dispensing or reviewing medicines needs to make sure that patients are involved in making decisions about their treatment and that more medicines are taken as recommended.

"Unwanted drugs in the home may mean that patients are not getting the benefit they could be from their medicines. It also represents a large amount of waste. We want patients on repeat prescriptions to think about what they are ordering and only ask for what they need and are running out of. Any other medicines can be dispensed when needed at a later date, as once medicines have been dispensed, they cannot be recycled"



A recent report from the Department of Health (Nov 23rd 2010) cited Medicine Usage Reviews as a potential way to reduce waste. Earlier this year (28 January), NICE (National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence) issued new guidelines to healthcare professionals on how to involve patients in making decisions about prescribed medicines and reduce the number of people not taking or using their medicines correctly.

Ade Adedapo, Community Pharmacist at The Olde Pharmacy in Wandsworth says: "There are a number of reasons why medicines are going to waste, including people no longer taking or using the drugs, but others may also be put at risk if unwanted medicines are left in the home.

"If anyone has any unused medicines at home we're encouraging them to take them back to the pharmacy for safe disposal and have a chat with the pharmacist or prescribing GP about their medicines on how to use them more effectively."

The campaign will encourage patients to have regular reviews of their medicines with their pharmacist or prescribing doctor to discuss any issues they may have with taking their medication

Anyone with unwanted medicines can return them to their local pharmacy where they will be disposed of safely. Neal Patel, Head of Corporate Communications for the Royal Pharmaceutical Society added "Getting maximum benefit from medicines is a common goal shared by patients, pharmacists and the NHS. Pharmacists are key healthcare professionals to provide a solution to achieve reduction in medicines waste and cost savings for the NHS.

"By reviewing medicine use and repeat dispensing pharmacists provide advice for people with long term conditions and help patients understand their therapy better"

The campaign will feature advertising on Magic FM. Steve Parkinson, Managing Director of Magic 105.4 commented: "This is an important initiative and we are delighted to be working with local Primary Care Trusts in mobilising Magic 105.4's 2.1 million listeners to assist in improving public health and reducing medicine waste."