

Minor Ailments

The NHS England evidence base report on the urgent care review, published in June 2013, highlighted the role that pharmacies could play in providing accessible care and helping many patients who would otherwise visit their GP for minor ailments. It concluded that *“community pharmacy services can play an important role in enabling self-care, particularly amongst patients with minor ailments and long term conditions.”*

Why is it important?

One in five GP consultations is for a self-limiting condition. By reducing the time spent by GPs on managing these minor ailments, it would reduce patient waiting times for other appointments which may be leading them to access expensive urgent care. In 2003, it was found that 8% of emergency department consultations involve consultations for minor ailments, costing the NHS £136 million annually. It would also enable GPs to focus on more complex cases.

Community pharmacies can have an important role in diverting patients away from A&E and GP practices thereby increasing capacity at both locations to deal with more urgent care.

What can Community Pharmacy do?

Community pharmacy offers the most cost effective provision of the treatment of minor ailments, with treatment in an A&E department costing between £58 and £112 for each presentation, and each visit to a walk-in-centre or similar service costing the NHS from £63 upwards, compared to a GP consultation typically costed at £43

Such consultations in pharmacy are less costly and have been shown to provide favourable health-related outcomes. A recent modelling analysis of the cost of a national minor ailments scheme in community pharmacies in England in 2011 showed that there was a

significant cost saving. The Department of Health undertook a Partial Impact Assessment in 2008 which proposed that a saving of £300m could be made with wide-scale implementation of local services.

Commissioning a Local Service Solution

First step is to talk to your Local Pharmaceutical Committee (LPC). Pinnacle Health LLP working with PSNC has created a business case template to provide you with the relevant information for your area.

Some simple questions that you might pose yourself to determine the need for a local service are:

- *Is it difficult to meet their current targets for urgent and emergency care?*
- *Are we considering the shift of medical services from secondary to primary care?*
- *Are we at ways to get the best use of limited NHS resources?*

Headline Outcome Data

In 2013, the pharmacies in a number of areas used PharmOutcomes to record minor ailments service provisions. The figures below detail outcomes from for one such area for one month only (July 2013).

- 65 active pharmacies offering service
- 12,150 consultations across all providers
- 93.7% consultations resulted in medicine issue and advice
- 45.5% were under the age of 16 years
- 97.6% of consultations saved a GP or A&E appointment
- 75.8% of patients were referred by their GP surgery

The cost of the 8% alone that would have attended A&E at the lowest PbR 2013 tariff, with no investigation and no significant treatment would be in excess of £650,000 for a year. The net saving to the NHS after paying for the community pharmacy service is over £200,000 per year excluding savings on GP time and Walk-In Centre activity.