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For immediate release

## People with asthma benefit from medicine reviews delivered by pharmacists

People with asthma have been helped to gain more control of their condition by a scheme offered by community pharmacists in the South of England, a report being highlighted by Asthma UK and PSNC has shown.

The Inhaler Technique Improvement Project enabled pharmacists to conduct structured reviews (called Medicines Use Reviews, or MURs) with people about their asthma and COPD medicines. During these reviews pharmacists tested how well peoples' conditions were being managed and gave specialist asthma inhaler advice, using innovative training devices to help people to make sure they were using their inhalers correctly.

Many people received two of these reviews, meaning their progress could be monitored.

Pharmacists involved in the project have now provided more than 5,100 of the reviews across 206 pharmacies in the South of England, with more than 800 follow-up reviews also completed. The project built on the national pharmacy Medicines Use Review (MUR) service, which helps patients with long-term conditions to manage their medicines.

As part of the reviews in the South of England, pharmacists carried out asthma control tests (ACT) or COPD assessment tests (CAT) and recorded the results in an electronic system. An analysis of the recorded data, covering 4,600 asthma control tests and 448 COPD assessment tests, has shown:

- In relative terms, 40 per cent of people with showed better asthma control during the time studied, while 55 per cent of COPD patients showed an improvement in symptom management.
- Analysis of data on emergency hospital admissions caused by asthma and COPD showed a positive association between the introduction of the pharmacy project and changes in emergency admission rates.
- There was evidence of improved COPD management following the pharmacy reviews – at the second review more patients achieved test scores indicating a less severe impact on their lives from COPD.
- There was evidence of improved asthma control between the first and second reviews – at the second review there was a 40 per cent relative increase in the number of patients achieving a test score representing good asthma control.
- The programme was popular, with the number of reviews being provided by pharmacies increasing.

**Simon Selo, Assistant Director of Policy and Service Development at Asthma UK, said:** “We are delighted to see the difference this innovative project can make to the lives of people with asthma. We know that good inhaler technique is an essential component of good asthma control but that it is not always followed by either healthcare professionals or people with asthma. We hope these experiences and learning will be widely disseminated across primary and secondary care so that more people with asthma can benefit from this project.”



**Alastair Buxton, Head of NHS Services at PSNC, said:**

“This proves what we have known for a long time – that community pharmacists make a real difference to people who have long-term conditions. Something as seemingly trivial as improving inhaler technique can lead to huge savings for the NHS in terms of reduced hospital admissions, as well as helping people with asthma to manage their condition more effectively. We believe that the Government should offer people with asthma a free medicines review at least annually, which could be carried out at their local pharmacy at a time convenient to them, with no need for an appointment.”

**Gary Warner, community pharmacist at Regent Pharmacy on the Isle of Wight, said:** “As a complement to the excellent care provided by asthma nurses and GPs in their surgeries, the real benefits to patients of this pharmacy innovation are now evident. It has been thrilling to be able to highlight and prove the real improvements that pharmacy has brought, particularly because in the new NHS, evidence of patient benefits and the ability to stop people ending up in hospital or developing a medical condition is going to be more important than ever.

Although this project started small on the Isle of Wight, it is now spreading through the country building on the work of many, as good innovations should. I hope this will continue and also believe that the ability of pharmacy to support patients at a time that suits them, rather than needing an appointment, means that this should be the first of many new services that patients can access to manage their ailments and conditions.”

## Notes to Editors

### About the Inhaler Technique Improvement Project

- The inhaler technique improvement project was delivered across nine PCTs – Berkshire East, Berkshire West, Buckinghamshire, Hampshire, the Isle of Wight, Milton Keynes, Oxfordshire, Portsmouth City and Southampton City – between April 2011 and August 2012.
- Local initiatives within the project were organised at PCT level, but all were funded by NHS South Central. They included training, equipment (such as innovative inhaler technique devices) and publicity support. Some pharmacies were also funded to deliver extra MURs.
- The project saw pharmacists trained in the effective use of inhalers and incorporating this into their MURs. In an online survey, pharmacists agreed the project had been well received by their patients and that the training had enabled them to effectively deal with their concerns. PCT project leads also reported that pharmacists' clinical knowledge had been improved, along with their interactions with their patients and their ability to deliver MURs.
- Data on peoples' control of asthma and COPD symptoms was captured during the MURs on an electronic system - the Enhanced Services Monitoring and Quality system.
- In the analysis, the results of 4,600 asthma control tests, carried out before and after MURs, were considered, along with those from 448 COPD assessment tests.
- Given the costs of poor inhaler technique and of emergency asthma admissions to hospital, the authors called the inhaler project “a relatively low cost-high impact intervention”.
- The project used innovative devices such as the two tone inhaler – this can help people to perfect their inhaler technique by emitting two tones if users breathe in too rapidly, one if the inhalation is correct, and none if the rate of inspiration is too slow.
- The incorporation of tests and data capturing in the MURs had given the reviews a structure that was both “helpful and motivating” for patients and practitioners, the report authors found. The use of the second MURs enabled both people with asthma and pharmacists to see the impact of the interventions, which helped to maintain motivation, they said.
- The analysis of the project can be viewed at: <http://www.networks.nhs.uk/nhs-networks/south-east-coast-respiratory-programme/news/formal-evaluation-of-the-inhaler-technique-improvement-project/?searchterm=evaluation%20of%20inhaler%20technique%20improvement>



#### **About Asthma UK**

- Asthma UK is the charity dedicated to improving the health and well-being of the 5.4 million people in the UK whose lives are affected by asthma.
- For up-to-date news on asthma, information and publications, visit the Asthma UK website [asthma.org.uk](http://asthma.org.uk).
- For independent and confidential advice on asthma, call the Asthma UK Adviceline, which is staffed by asthma nurse specialists. It is open weekdays from 9am to 5pm on 0800 121 62 44



#### **About PSNC**

- PSNC (The Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee) is the body that represents community pharmacies in England and Wales on NHS matters. It is recognised by the Secretary of State for Health as the representative of community pharmacy on these matters.
- PSNC represents and promotes the interests of 10,500 pharmacy contractors (owners) in England.
- It is the role of PSNC to liaise with the Department of Health and representatives of the NHS in England to negotiate the contractual terms for the provision of NHS community pharmacy services.
- PSNC's main objective is to secure the best possible NHS service opportunities, remuneration, terms and conditions for NHS pharmacy contractors in England.

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