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Medicines Use Reviews are clinically effective and save the NHS money

TaxPayers' Alliance comments outdated and inaccurate

Medicines Use Reviews carried out in community pharmacies are not a 'wasteful subsidy', but an effective clinical service that saves money for the NHS. Responding to a report from the TaxPayers' Alliance, PSNC, the body that represents community pharmacists on NHS issues, said that the attack on the service is unjustified and based on flawed research.

PSNC Chief Executive **Sue Sharpe** said:

"The TaxPayers' Alliance is barking up the wrong tree here. The annual UK medicines bill is expected to rise to £15 billion by 2014 and it's services such as the Medicines Use Review which keep this bill down. The service benefits patients too, a study from Hampshire and the Isle of Wight found that 37% of asthma patients who had the services were previously not taking their medicines correctly, and nearly half benefited from information support. 30% of patients using the service hadn't seen a GP or a nurse within the last 12 months.

"Medicines Use Reviews more than pay for themselves by helping patients to make the most of their medicines, which reduces waste for the NHS and improves patients' quality of life. It would be a disservice to patients and the NHS to simply hand out medicines to patients and let them get on with it.

"A substantial body of research shows that Medicines Use Reviews are clinically effective and offer good value to the NHS, whereas the source for the TaxPayers' Alliance report is a single study from 2007. The TaxPayers' Alliance's report ignores the major changes introduced last year to improve Medicines Use Reviews. It's clear that the authors didn't bother to pick up the phone themselves and speak to any patients or pharmacists before publishing this misleading note.

"If the NHS is to save money on its spiralling medicines bill, we need more, not fewer of these good value pharmacy services provided at the heart of the community."

Facts about Medicines Use Reviews:

- At least twenty academic studies over the past five years have found benefits in the Medicines Use Review service
- Medicines Use Reviews can harness pharmacists' five years training in the use of medicines to improve prescribing behaviour and help patients gain maximum benefit from their medicines
- More than half of patients interviewed in a 2008 study saw their side-effects reduced or stopped after using the service
- Studies in 2011 and 2010 found that GPs and patients believe the service helps to improve compliance with prescribers' directions
- A 2009 study found that 37% of asthma patients were not taking their medicines correctly, and 30% had not been to see a GP or a nurse for 12 months. The same study found that nearly half of all asthma patients required extra information about their medicines to help them use them effectively
- Medicines Use Reviews save money by reducing unnecessary prescribing, preventing unnecessary hospital admissions, and easing the burden on GPs