

The Working in Partnership Programme

Addressing workload management in general practice

Joining Up Self-care in the NHS

The *Working in Partnership Programme* (WIPP) has been established under the new GMS Contract to develop and implement a strategy for general practice that addresses the effective use of clinicians' time whilst improving the availability of services for patients.

The WIPP has commissioned a scheme to evaluate the impact of an integrated approach to self-care within a local health economy.

Workload

Many patients are unaware of the range of symptoms and conditions they can safely manage for themselves or their families. Often when patients decide to seek professional health care or advice, they are unfamiliar with all of the services available to them.

This results in a demand for consultations either that appropriate self-care might have prevented, or which could have been fulfilled via schemes that offer an alternative to traditional general practice.

GPs estimate that around 30 per cent of their consultations are with patients that don't need to see a doctor.

GPs suggest patients could alternatively see:

- Practice nurse in surgery
- Pharmacist
- Counsellor
- Social worker
- District nurse

Reference 1

Managing the issues

Self-care has become an important component of strategies within the NHS, as part of its commitment to deliver care in the most appropriate setting.

Encouraging patients to have confidence in self-care will enable them to take a more active role in managing their health and to:

- Take steps to prevent ill-health and promote good health
- Recognise non-serious health symptoms and deal with them appropriately
- Recognise serious health symptoms and seek advice quickly
- Self-care for long term conditions
- Make effective and appropriate use of the full range of health services available to them locally

Clarifying the support PCTs and practices need to successfully develop and deliver their own plans for an integrated self-care service is also an important contribution to the wider strategy for health as outlined in the NHS Plan and 'Building on the Best'.

A survey of GPs concludes that patients still need to take more of a lead in educating themselves about their health:

- » 50 per cent of GPs say less than 10 per cent of their patients educate themselves about their condition before their visit
- « Three-quarters of GPs say patients who educate themselves improve the quality of decisions made about their healthcare and thus benefit their health

Reference 1

The scheme

The *Joining Up Self-care in the NHS* scheme has been commissioned to help to manage these issues. There are a number of existing initiatives related in different ways to self-care, but these have not so far been 'joined up' at the local level. In commissioning this scheme, the WIPP will support a test PCT in the evaluation of its integrated self-care strategy.

The scheme comprises three elements:

1. Disease prevention - prevention of coronary heart disease in people aged over 30
2. Management of long-term conditions -an education programme for parents and carers of children with asthma, aged up to 16
3. Treatment of minor ailments by mothers and carers of young children

The *Joining Up Self-care in the NHS* scheme is being developed and progressed by a multi-disciplinary steering group, which is facilitated by the Proprietary Association of Great Britain (PAGB; the national trade association for manufacturers of over the counter medicines and food supplements).

Other partners in the scheme include the Department of Health, the NHS, the Universities of Keele and Nottingham, the Royal College of General Practitioners and the National Association of Primary Care.

Pilot site

Erewash PCT (Derbyshire) is the test site. Each of the three elements (above) builds on existing self-care initiatives within Erewash PCT that include promotion of lifestyle intervention to prevent heart disease, the Expert Patient Programme and a pharmacy-led minor ailments scheme.

Evaluation

The overall objectives of the *Joining Up Self-care in the NHS* scheme, in its evaluation of the integrated approach being trialled within Erewash PCT, are to:

- Explore the attitudes and behaviours of patients and health care professionals towards self-care
- Assess how influencing people at significant times in their lives, or influencing a significant member of a family, will affect the likelihood of changing their behaviour and that of those around them

- « Identify the needs of PCTs and practices in adopting and implementing an integrated self-care strategy
- « Evaluate the impact on Erewash PCT's local health economy
- « Investigate the impact on workload in general practice

Further information

Working in Partnership Programme:
www.wipp.nhs.uk

Joining Up Self-care in the NHS scheme:
www.pagb.co.uk or email the Project Lead
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References

1. Norwich Union: "Health of the Nation" survey (a panel survey of 255 GPs by Dr Foster on behalf Norwich Union) January 2004,

The *Working in Partnership Programme* sits within the portfolio of support available to Primary Care Trusts and practices from the NHS Modernisation Agency's National Primary and Care Trust Development