

EMBARGO until 28th April 2008

NHS in Derby Launches Major Campaign to Reduce Medicine Wastage

Wasted medication is costing the NHS in Derby over £2 million every year, according to local health chiefs at Derby City Primary Care Trust as they unveil a major campaign to help reduce medicine wastage.

In the Derby City Primary Care Trust area this money could pay for:

- 400 more hip replacements or;
- 280 more heart by-pass operations or;
- 2,800 more cataract operations or;
- 60 more community nurses or;
- 360 more knee replacements.

In a bid to save money to pay for other services, GPs and pharmacists across Derby have joined together to launch a new campaign to tackle the problem.

One of the main concerns is medicines on repeat prescriptions, which are ordered and collected by patients but are not needed because they have stopped using the drugs.

These unwanted medicines are the target of this new campaign which will help Derby City Primary Care Trust to save money and improve healthcare.

People with repeat prescriptions will be reminded to only order what they need. Once medicines have been dispensed they cannot be recycled and have to be thrown away – whether they've been used or not.

Patients are also being encouraged to have regular reviews of their medicines with their pharmacist or prescribing doctor to discuss any issues they may have with their drugs. Another focus of the campaign is to raise awareness of the dangers of having unused medicines lying around at home. This may be a significant danger, particularly if there are young children present.

Laraine Tuplin, Assistant Director of Medicines Management at Derby City PCT, says: "We are constantly looking at ways to deliver better and more effective patient care. 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.

"Wasted medicines means wasted money. It can't be used again and if we could save some of that money we could reinvest it in other areas of healthcare to benefit the local community.

"There are a number of reasons why medicines are going to waste, including people no longer needing the drugs, but others may also be put at risk if unwanted drugs 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 medication and how to use their drugs more effectively."

Posters will be displayed on buses and bus shelters across Derby and thousands of posters and leaflets will also be distributed to GP surgeries and pharmacies. Inserts have also been produced to go into prescription bags in pharmacies.

The campaign, which runs throughout April and May, will encourage people not to stockpile medicines, only to order what is needed and to take all prescription medicines with them if they are going to hospital.

Anyone with unwanted medicines can return them to their local pharmacy where they will be disposed of safely.

Further details of the campaign can be found by visiting - www.medicinewaste-eastmidlands.com.

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Media contacts:

For further information, please contact Liz Limbert, Communications Manager at Derby City PCT on 01332 224000, ext 6297 or email liz.limbert@derbycitypct.nhs.uk

Notes to Editors:

Drug wastage was one of the key elements highlighted in the National Audit Office report 'Prescribing costs in primary care', published 18 May 2007. Using the Department of Health's own estimations, as much as 10 per cent of all drugs prescribed are wasted – this means up to £800 million-worth of drugs are wasted nationally each year in primary care