

Embargoed until 28th April 2008

NHS IN EAST MIDLANDS SUPPORTS CAMPAIGNS
TO REDUCE MEDICINE WASTAGE

Wasted medication is costing the NHS in the East Midlands over £30m every year, according to local health chiefs, as today they back region-wide campaigns to help reduce medicine wastage.

In the region this money could pay for:

- 6,000 more hip replacements or;
- 4,200 more heart by-pass operations or;
- 42,000 more cataract operations or;
- 900 more community nurses or;
- 5,400 more knee replacements.

In a bid to save money to pay for other services, GPs and pharmacists have joined together to launch campaigns led by nine primary care trusts across the East Midlands 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 the health services in the East Midlands to save money and improve healthcare.

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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 have 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.

Professor Mayur Lakhani, who is the Medical Director for NHS East Midlands and a GP in Leicestershire, said: “As a practising GP, I really welcome this campaign. I know of examples where GPs and pharmacists have come across several carrier bags full of unused medicines in people's homes. The cost of this wastage at £30 million is staggering. I would urge people to order only what they need and to have regular medication reviews with their pharmacist or GP.”

The campaigns 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:

Professor Lakhani will be available for media interviews on 28th April and for further information call the NHS Communications Team at NHS East Midlands on 0115 9684468.

Notes to Editors:

The campaigns will run from the end of April and throughout May and will be lead by Bassetlaw PCT, Derby City PCT, Derbyshire County PCT, Leicester City PCT, Leicester County & Rutland PCT, Lincolnshire Teaching PCT, Northamptonshire PCT, Nottingham City PCT and Nottinghamshire County Teaching PCT.

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 care¹

¹ Department of Health, *Management of Medicines: A resource to support implementation of the wider aspects of medicines management for the National Service Frameworks for Diabetes, Renal Services and Long Term Conditions*, July 2004