

News Release

April 28, 2008

City bid to reduce wasted medicines

WASTED medication is costing the NHS in Leicester over £5 million every year, according to local health experts, as they unveil a major campaign to help reduce medicine wastage.

In Leicester the city's Primary Care Trust says this money could pay for:

- 1,000 more hip replacements or;
- 700 more heart by-pass operations or;
- 7,000 more cataract operations or;
- 150 more community nurses or;
- 900 more knee replacements.

In a bid to save money to pay for other services, GPs and pharmacists across Leicester are joining forces in a campaign to tackle the problem, beginning this week (April 28).

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 the new campaign which will help Leicester 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.

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Another focus of the campaign is to raise awareness of the dangers of having unused medicines lying around at home, particularly if there are young children present.

Susanna Taylor, Head of Medicines Management at the trust, said: "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. They can't be used again and if we could save some of that money we could reinvest it in other areas of healthcare," she added.

Posters will be displayed on buses and bus shelters across Leicester 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 at chemists.

City pharmacist Satyan Kotecha, of Ely's Pharmacy, Melton Road, said: "If anyone has any unused medicines at home we're encouraging them to bring 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."

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.

Ends

For more information please contact Andy Goss on (0116) 2954123 or email Andy.Goss@leicestercitypct.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 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