

NEWS RELEASE: Monday 28 April 2008

NHS IN LINCOLNSHIRE LAUNCHES MAJOR CAMPAIGN
TO REDUCE MEDICINE WASTAGE

Wasted medication is costing the NHS in Lincolnshire over £5 million every year, according to local health chiefs, as today - 28 April - they unveil a major campaign to help reduce wastage of medicines.

In Lincolnshire Teaching Primary Care Trust this money could pay for:

- 1000 more hip replacements or;
- 700 more heart by-pass operations or;
- 7000 more cataract operations or;
- 150 more community nurses or;
- 900 more knee replacements.

In a bid to help patients get the most from their medicines and to reduce the scale of medicine waste, Lincolnshire tPCT is launching a new campaign designed to tackle the problem.

One of the main concerns is over ordering of repeat medicines when the patient already has sufficient stocks or no longer needs the medicine.

Patients receiving repeat prescriptions will be reminded to only order what they need. It will also be emphasised that dispensed medicines cannot be recycled; even unopened packs have to be disposed of through the pharmaceutical waste collection service. All dispensing GP surgeries and community pharmacies in Lincolnshire participate in this scheme. Anyone with unwanted medicines can return them to their local pharmacy or dispensing practice where they will be disposed of safely.

Patients are also being encouraged to have regular reviews of their medicines with their pharmacist or prescribing doctor to discuss any issues relating to 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,
Improving Health, Improving Services

particularly if there are young children present. Patients will also be encouraged to take all of their medicines with them when they go into hospital.

Stephen Gibson, Head of Prescribing and Medicines Management for Lincolnshire tPCT said “As medicines become an increasingly important part of both preventative medicine and treatment, more and more patients are receiving prescribed medicines on the NHS. This is, in turn, driving up levels of waste. Our main messages to Lincolnshire patients are ‘only order what you need; don’t tick every item on your repeat order form when you don’t need everything; and return any unused medicines to your local community pharmacy or dispensing surgery for safe disposal.’

“Wasted medicines mean wasted money. They cannot be reused. If we could save even a fraction of the money wasted, we could reinvest it in other areas of healthcare to benefit the local community.”

Posters will be displayed on buses and bus shelters across Lincolnshire and thousands of posters and leaflets will also be distributed to GP surgeries and pharmacies. Inserts have been produced to include in prescription bags at pharmacies and dispensing practices to emphasise these important points.

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

ENDS

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Notes to Editors:

- Stephen Gibson, Head of Prescribing and Medicines Management is available for interview
- 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 careⁱ

ⁱ 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