

March 16, 2010

## SELF CARE: AN ETHICAL IMPERATIVE

### FACT SHEET

- £2bn is the cost to the NHS of patients seeing the GP for ailments that can be self-treated
- £2bn is equivalent to an average of £250,000 every year per general practice in England
- 57m GP consultations every year involve minor ailments which can be self-treated
- Of these 57m consultations, 51.4m involve a minor ailments only, equating to 18% of GP workload
- 91% of these consultations end in a prescription, which cost the NHS £371 million annually
- Treatment of 10 minor ailments account for 75% of GP consultations for minor ailments
- Top 10 ailments and number of consultations annually:

Back pain	8.4m
Dermatitis	6.8m
Heartburn and indigestion	6.8m
Nasal congestion	5.3m
Constipation	4.3m
Migraine	2.7m
Cough	2.6m
Acne	2.4m
Sprains and strains	2.2m
Headache	1.8m

- Almost 50 per cent of these consultations are generated by 16 – 59 year olds and yet the elderly and children need the service most
- A common cold can last for up to 21 days yet only 4% of people would continue to self treat for 15 – 28 days
- Many people do self treat minor illnesses initially
  - 21% purchase non-prescription medicines without advice
  - 20% use medicines they already have at home
- Evidence shows that they stop self medicating much earlier than they need to
  - 14% of people would continue with self treatment for 1 – 3 days
  - 32% of people will self treat for 4 – 7 days
  - 15% would continue for 14 days
  - 4% for 15 – 28 days
- Cost to the NHS of the following services<sup>1</sup>

999	£455
Stepping into A & E:	£111
Stepping into the GP surgery:	£32
A call to NHS Direct	£16
A click on NHS Choices website	£0.46
Self care	£0 – on average £3.50

<sup>1</sup>Source NHS Direct and NHS Choices

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For further information  
 Sian Thomas at Salix Consulting on 0208 675 4779 or 07850 710459  
 Email: [sian.thomas@salixconsulting.com](mailto:sian.thomas@salixconsulting.com)

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