

**Embargoed until 6am March 16, 2010**

## **EMINENT CLINICIANS CALL ON ALL POLITICAL PARTIES TO END NHS DEPENDENCY CULTURE**

**57 million GP consultations for minor ailments costs NHS £2 billion annually**

A report published today, *Self Care: An Ethical Imperative*, presents the results of research<sup>1</sup> that reveals the catastrophic impact of the public's dependency on the NHS and that the NHS has become the victim of a demand-led culture. The report, published by the *Self Care Campaign* advocacy group states that seeing a GP for ailments that can be self-treated is estimated to cost an astonishing £2bn every year. With the NHS Confederation forecasting a shortfall of £20bn in NHS funding over the next five years, a shift in behaviour around treating minor ailments could save the NHS £10bn during that time, without any cuts to services whatsoever.

The report highlights that common disturbances to normal good health, such as coughs and colds, are accounting for nearly one fifth of GP workload. Of the 57 million consultations which involved a minor ailment, 51.4m are for minor ailments alone, which is testament to an NHS addressing demand rather than need - the founding principle of the service.

The *Self Care Campaign* manifesto is calling on all political parties to support the campaign at an individual, local and national level and to:

- allow people to be confident in their self care choices
- enable healthcare professionals, especially the GP and practice nurse, to offer support in making people feel confident enough to use the NHS at the point of need, not demand
- introduce a social marketing campaign to educate people to understand and manage minor ailments with the right information so that GPs' and practice nurses' time is freed up to look after more complex conditions

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise stated, statistics and research findings are from *Making the Case for the Self Care of Minor Ailments*, TNS Healthcare, a Kantar Health Company, August 2009, commissioned by the Proprietary Association Great Britain

- ensure children are educated through the national curriculum to understand health issues and how to use the NHS effectively and appropriately.

Dr Paul Stillman, a GP in Crawley, Sussex and a GP trainer with the British Postgraduate Medical Federation, says: “There are real advantages for everyone if we can encourage people to take greater control over the management of their minor ailments. This represents a win-win for all - there will be a reduction in the use of prescriptions and antibiotics, GPs can spend more time on complex consultations and patients can treat themselves without delay and the NHS will save billions that can be put to more appropriate use/reinvested in the service. Self care does not mean no care – it means giving people the tools to make an informed choice, which is why we are issuing this important manifesto.”

Ends -

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White paper [www.selfcarecampaign.org/white-paper](http://www.selfcarecampaign.org/white-paper)

Fact sheet [www.selfcarecampaign.org/media-information](http://www.selfcarecampaign.org/media-information)

Advocacy group biographies [www.selfcarecampaign.org/advocates](http://www.selfcarecampaign.org/advocates)

**Notes to editors:**

The Top 10 minor ailments and number of consultations annually are:

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|-----------------------------|------|
| • 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 |

The *Self Care Campaign* launched in March 2009 and is made up of professionals from key organisations across primary care including the Royal College of General Practitioners, NHS Alliance, National Association of Primary Care and the Proprietary Association of Great Britain. Its key objective is to bring an end to the culture of dependency on the NHS for the treatment of mild to moderate minor ailments. Its advocacy group includes:

Peter Baker, Men's Health Forum

Dr Ian Banks, Men's Health Forum

Dr Michael Dixon OBE, NHS Alliance, GP mid Devon

Dr Simon Fradd, GP, Nottingham

Professor David Haslam CBE, GP, Cambridgeshire

Sheila Kelly OBE, executive director, PAGB

Dr John Chisholm CBE, GP, south London

Gopa Mitra MBE, director of health policy and public affairs, PAGB

Dr Raj Patel, NHS Alliance, Tameside and Glossop PCT and NHS North West

Professor Mike Pringle CBE, University of Nottingham

Sara Richards, RGN (registered general nurse), ex vice-chair, Practice Nurse Association,  
Royal College of Nursing

Dr Peter Smith OBE, vice president of the National Association of Primary Care

Douglas Smallwood, chief executive, Diabetes UK

Professor Nigel Sparrow, GP, Nottinghamshire

Dr Paul Stillman, GP, West Sussex

Susan Summers, assistant director of quality assurance and self care, North West Strategic  
Health Authority