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To: RQIA
Trust Medical Directors
Trust Heads of Pharmacy
Trust Directors of Nursing

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Date: 15th December 2016

Dear Colleague

OPTIMISING MEDICINES USE IN PRIMARY CARE BY REDUCING THE PRESCRIBING OF OTC TREATMENTS FOR COMMON CONDITIONS AND NON EVIDENCE BASED MEDICINES

As you may be aware, Richard Pengelly, Permanent Secretary from the Department of Health, wrote to GPs on 1st December 2016 to secure their immediate support to reduce the prescribing of the following types of medicines:

- Medicines for the treatment of minor conditions and self-limiting illnesses which may be purchased at low cost without the need for a GP appointment or prescription, *and*
- Medicines with limited evidence of efficacy

A copy of this letter and a follow-up one to GPs from the HSCB are enclosed for your information.

Action for RQIA:

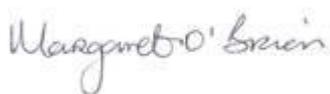
Please share this communication with residential and nursing homes to ensure that all relevant care home staff are aware of this initiative and can take steps to support these recommendations when managing patients' medicines.

Action for Trusts:

Please share this communication with all relevant staff in your Trust area to ensure that they are aware of this initiative, and encourage them to support these recommendations where appropriate when engaging with patients. Examples of key staff to support the initiative include District Nurses, and staff working in Emergency Departments.

Thank you for your assistance with this very important area of work.

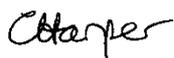
Yours sincerely



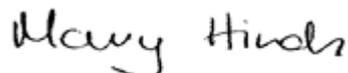
Dr Margaret O'Brien
Assistant Director DOIC
Head of GMS



Mr Joe Brogan
Assistant Director DOIC
Head of Pharmacy & Medicine
Management



Dr Carolyn Harper
Medical Director/
Director of Public Health



Mrs Mary Hinds
Director of Nursing, Midwifery
and Allied Health Professionals



Who else can help me?

Pharmacists are an excellent resource to help with self-care. They can advise you on simple remedies and medicines to help ease your symptoms. They can also advise how long your symptoms should last before you start to feel better.

Why wait? - you don't need an appointment to see a pharmacist. This can also free up more time for your GP. It might make it easier to get a convenient appointment the next time you need one.

Anything else I can do?

There's lots more information available if you need it at

www.selfcareforum.org
www.nhs.uk
niformulary.hscni.net/PatientZone
www.nidirect.gov.uk/choosewell

Go Ahead treat yourself!

Sometimes it's better to do it yourself



Most common illnesses can be treated by you. By making positive choices and taking control of minor illnesses, you will increase your confidence which is good for your health and wellbeing. Your local pharmacist can provide advice and help you manage minor illnesses.

What is self-care?

Self-care is about health decisions that people make for themselves and their families to get and stay well, both physically and mentally.

How does this affect me?

Common health complaints, such as coughs, colds and headaches, account for up to one out of every five GP appointments. Many of these can be treated faster and just as effectively at home using self-care, advice from your pharmacist and over-the-counter medicines bought from pharmacies or supermarkets.



Think before you order a prescription!

Medicines are available in your local pharmacy to treat:

- Minor aches and pains
- Coughs, colds and sore throats
- Hay fever
- Indigestion
- Nappy rash
- Colic
- Cold sore
- Ear wax
- Head lice
- Occasional diarrhoea
- Vaginal thrush
- Treatments for threadworms

The following products are also available to purchase over-the-counter:

- Baby milks*
- Tonics, vitamins and other nutritional supplements

* Some babies may require cow's milk free formulas on NHS prescription where clinically appropriate

Why am I being encouraged to self care?

Our Health Service has a limited budget. Spending money on treatments for minor illnesses reduces the money available for treating more serious conditions such as heart disease and cancer.

Why should I bother?

Having to take a day off work or organise child care to see a GP or other health professional can make life difficult for people. By being able to self-diagnose and self-care appropriately, you could save yourself a lot of time and hassle.

What's in it for me?

Being able to self-manage symptoms such as cough, fever and minor aches and pains improves people's quality of life. It helps you feel more positive and confident in your own ability to look after your health. Knowing where to find trusted information rather than going – and waiting to see – a health professional for every health problem can feel liberating. It also gives you a feeling of being in control.

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We need your help

Our Health Service has a limited budget. Spending money on treatments for minor illnesses reduces the money available to treat more serious conditions such as heart disease and cancer. Self managing minor illnesses will also help free up GP appointments.

