

## Press Release



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### **NPA HIGHLIGHTS COMMUNITY PHARMACY'S ROLE IN PROMOTING PATIENT CHOICE IN PRIMARY CARE**

Patient choice shot to the top of the NHS's policy agenda this week, and the National Pharmaceutical Association (NPA) reacted immediately to the Government's appeal for key health service stakeholders to debate the issue.

Monday saw the official launch of a Department of Health consultation pack, *Fair for All, Personal To You*, which will form the basis for discussions closing in November. The aim is to improve patients' experiences by making services responsive to individual needs, but at the same time equitable.

NPA has written to the chair of a Task Group established to oversee the debate on Choice in Primary Care, pointing out the central role community pharmacy has in promoting genuine patient choice:

- no-one *chooses* to be a 'patient' in the first place (with obvious exceptions, such as most pregnant women); engaged in self-care through a pharmacy, people do not necessarily see themselves as patients
- community pharmacy-run schemes aimed at helping people to manage their medicines offers many older people the choice to live independently at home, instead of a hospital or residential care setting
- for people with chronic diseases, patient empowerment is closely related to the ability to make *informed* choices about their own care; community pharmacists are set to play an increasing part in supporting patient education and concordance
- patient choice is only meaningful where capacity is sufficient to accommodate it; fully utilizing community pharmacy would greatly increase (and also free up) capacity throughout the health care system
- choice is a matter of *when* you are treated as well as how and by whom; community pharmacists are among the most accessible healthcare professionals
- community pharmacy is sometimes the only accessible choice for expert healthcare advice e.g. where there is no GP (notably in rural areas and inner cities where GP recruitment is in continuing crisis)
- the community pharmacy network is not only about choice of healthcare facilities, but also helps maintain the option of shopping in other retail outlets in local neighbourhoods by helping to keep local economies vibrant and prosperous

- in addition to these key benefits is the more obvious point that community pharmacy adds to the choices of providers to whom a GP might refer

NPA Head of NHS Service Development, Georgina Craig, said: "Community pharmacy has a legitimate place in any debate about patient choice. NPA recognises the importance personally attached to this issue by the Secretary of State and we share his vision of a responsive but equitable Health Service."

The NPA, together with the Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee, is currently touring national patient groups to talk about choices available via community pharmacy. Patients' comments will help NPA draw up its full, formal response to the Government's consultation document.

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