



Medicine Waste

For release Tuesday 13th December

**NHS IN SWINDON LAUNCHES MAJOR CAMPAIGN
TO REDUCE £1.2 MILLION MEDICINE WASTAGE**

A campaign aimed at reducing an estimated £1.2 million wasted on medicines has been launched today by NHS Swindon. The campaign aims to raise awareness about correctly ordering repeat prescriptions and helping people get the best from their medicines.

The potential money wasted on medicines across Swindon, could pay for;

- 323 hip replacements or
- 405 knee replacements or
- 47 community nurses or
- 79 drug treatment courses for breast cancer or
- 1,200 more drug treatment courses for Alzheimer's

GPs and pharmacists across Swindon have joined together in a bid to educate patients about their treatment and to help patients understand more about their medicines and the options they have.

One of the main concerns is medicines on repeat prescriptions, which are ordered and collected by patients but are not used. It is estimated that £90 million worth of unused prescription medicines are retained in individuals' homes, across the UK, at any one time¹. Between 40-50% of patients do not take or use their medicines as prescribed¹. This can occur for a number of



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reasons, including:

- patients not believing the medicine is necessary;
- possible side effects;
- fitting taking or using medicines into daily routines;
- choosing between medicines if patients' feel they are taking too many, and;
- cutting down or stopping medicines they have been taking for a long time.

Posters and leaflets will be displayed in pharmacies and GP practices to raise awareness of medicine waste among both patients and carers. Further information may also be found on a new national website www.medicinewaste.com

Dr Peter Mack, local GP and prescribing lead at NHS Swindon said: "Everyone involved in prescribing, dispensing or reviewing medicines needs to make sure that patients are involved in making decisions about their treatment and that more medicines are taken as recommended."

"Unwanted drugs in the home may mean that patients are not getting the benefit they could be from their medicines. It also represents a large amount of waste. We want patients on repeat prescriptions to think about what they are ordering and only ask for what they need and are running out of. Any other medicines can be dispensed when needed at a later date, as once medicines have been dispensed, they cannot be recycled"

A recent report from the Department of Health (Nov 23rd 2010) cited



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Medicine Usage Reviews as a potential way to reduce waste. Earlier this year (28 January), NICE (National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence) issued new guidelines to healthcare professionals on how to involve patients in making decisions about prescribed medicines and reduce the number of people not taking or using their medicines correctly.

Charlie Wu, Community Pharmacist in Moredon, says: "There are a number of reasons why medicines are going to waste, including people no longer taking or using the drugs, but others may also be put at risk if unwanted medicines are left in the home.

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"If anyone has any unused medicines at home we're encouraging them to take them back to the pharmacy for safe disposal and have a chat with the pharmacist about their medicines on how to use them more effectively."

The campaign will encourage patients to have regular reviews of their medicines and to discuss any issues they may have with taking their medication with their pharmacist.

Anyone with unwanted medicines can return them to their local pharmacy where they will be disposed of safely.

ENDS

Media contacts:

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Media Launch Details:

[Press/photographers are invited to Moredon Medical Centre, Moredon Road, SN2 2JG at 12pm.](#)

Notes to editors:

A recent report by the Department of Health estimates that £300 million is wasted on unused medicines across England.¹

¹ Department of Health, Evaluation of the Scale, Causes and Costs of Waste Medicines, November 2010