A community pharmacy minor ailment scheme — effective, rapid and convenient

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To determine patients’ views on a minor ailment scheme (MAS) in order to inform future service development. The NHS plan for England states that, by 2004, patients should be seen either by a GP within 48 hours or by another primary care professional within 24 hours.

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Abstract

Aim

To determine patients’ views on a minor ailment scheme (MAS) in order to inform future service development.

Design

Confidential questionnaire survey

Subjects and setting

Patients who had accessed the Chorley & Ribble Primary Care Trust MAS in its first six months and who had given their consent to participate.

Results

Almost all respondents were positive about the scheme, will use it again and will recommend it to others. Respondents liked the scheme because they were now able to get free medicines at the pharmacy without recourse to a GP prescription (97%), and because they did not have to make an appointment with the GP (96%). Most respondents appreciated that the scheme gave them the choice of having their minor ailment treated elsewhere (93%) and they could get medical advice without going to a surgery (88%). Most respondents agreed the scheme saved them time, it was easier to see the pharmacist than the GP and their...
access to treatment had improved. Where minor ailment treatment and advice on medicines are concerned, around 70% of respondents are equally satisfied with consulting a pharmacist as they would be with consulting their GP. However, almost 25% of respondents expressed uncertainty on this. Nevertheless 93% of respondents would return to a pharmacist for treatment of a minor ailment. While most respondents considered the range of illnesses covered by the scheme satisfactory, half wanted further conditions added.

Conclusions

People who have accessed the MAS found it to be effective in terms of providing rapid and convenient access to advice and treatment.

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From minor issues to complex conditions, pharmacists today are providing more services and care to help meet the demand for convenient, accessible, and cost-efficient health care services. While the addition of these services within a community pharmacy can increase convenience and access, the evidence regarding impact and potential to improve health outcomes, and reduce the economic burden on the Canadian health care system is still not well known or articulated. Pharmacists may contribute to a more effective and efficient health care system if they are supported to work to optimum scope as opposed to full scope of practice. For example, although services such as minor ailment assessment/prescribing or...