

**Media Release
3rd December 2010**

**Study to evaluate community pharmacy management of minor ailments
commissioned by PPRT**

As part of its objective to provide evidence of effective patient outcomes and the economic value of pharmacist interventions, the Pharmacy Practice Research Trust (PPRT) has awarded a major grant to the Centre of Academic Primary Care, University of Aberdeen for a two year research programme to investigate community pharmacy management of minor ailments.

The research programme, to be led by Dr Margaret Watson, Senior Research Fellow at the Centre of Academic Primary Care, aims to derive evidence that will inform recommendations regarding the future delivery of minor ailments services in community pharmacies in the UK. It will be undertaken across Scotland and England by a multidisciplinary research team from the Universities of Aberdeen and East Anglia plus NHS Grampian and will focus on:

- a systematic review of published and non-published data
- identifying ailments that appear to have the highest impact on the workload of high cost services, i.e. GPs and A&E
- evaluating different models of delivery of care which compares both costs and patient outcomes
- research into the triggers to seeking care for minor ailments from pharmacies
- evaluating pharmacists' consultation and diagnostic skills in these areas and their impact on patient outcomes

Dr Watson said: "A major review of community pharmacy NHS minor ailment schemes was published in 2002 but since then there has been no systematic collation of the evidence of effectiveness or cost-effectiveness of these schemes. We hope that our research will generate a range of outcomes which can be used to inform future policy, practice and future

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research initiatives. For example, we are aiming to identify which ailments that can be treated in community pharmacies are still being presented for treatment in the higher cost settings of A+E and general practice plus a multi-disciplinary consensus on which ailments are suitable for treatment in the community pharmacy setting.”

Beth Allen, PPRT Trust Director said: “The treatment of minor ailments in community pharmacy is a topic we identified as needing further research in order to develop a robust evidence base which can be used to inform future service, policy development and delivery. We hope that this research programme will provide sufficient evidence for the wider provision of pharmacy interventions in this area, as well as stimulating opportunities to secure funding for future research.”

Ends

For further media information contact: Bonnie Green on 07774 650 391
email: bonnie.green@rpsgb.org

Notes to editors:

1. ***Community pharmacy management of minor ailments:*** Dr Margaret Watson, Senior Research Fellow, Centre of Academic Primary Care, University of Aberdeen; Dr Richard Holland, Reader in Public Health Medicine, School of Medicine, Health Policy and Practice, University of East Anglia; Dr Tracey Sach, Snr Lecturer in Health Economics, School of Medicine, Health Policy and Practice, University of East Anglia; Dr Jennifer Cleland, Snr Clinical Lecturer, Division of Medical and Dental Education, University of Aberdeen; Professor Christine Bond, Professor of Primary Care, Centre of Academic Primary Care, University of Aberdeen; Dr David Wright, Snr Lecturer in Pharmacy Practice, School of Pharmacy, University of East Anglia; Mr James Ferguson, Consultant Surgeon in Emergency Medicine, NHS Grampian.

2. Aims and objectives of research programme:

Aims:

- To identify and summarise empirical evaluations of community pharmacy-based minor ailments services in terms of patient outcomes and cost-effectiveness
- To identify the minor ailments that have the highest impact on the workload of high cost services such as GPs and Accident and Emergency using routinely collected data
- To seek consensus amongst health professionals in settings where most minor ailments are most often treated (in general practices, community pharmacies, A&E departments) about which ailments are regarded as minor ailments
- To compare the effectiveness (patient outcomes) and cost-effectiveness of the different models of delivery of care for selected minor ailments in community pharmacy, general practice and A&E
- To explore patient triggers for seeking care for minor ailments from community pharmacies
- To assess the effect of pharmacists’ consultation and diagnostic performance in the management of selected minor ailments on patient outcome
- To evaluate pharmacists’ consultation and diagnostic performance in the management of selected minor ailments.

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1 Lambeth High Street, London SE1 7JN, Tel: 020 7572 2278
www.pprt.org.uk email: practiceresearch@rpsgb.org

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The research questions to be addressed are:

1. What is the evidence of the effectiveness (patient outcome) and cost-effectiveness of minor ailments services?
2. Which minor ailments have the highest impact on work load in general practice and A&E settings?
3. Which ailments do healthcare professionals in primary care settings regard to be minor ailments (that can be treated in community pharmacies)?
4. How do the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of different models of delivery of care for minor ailments compare?
5. What factors influence a patient's decision to seek care for a minor ailment from a community pharmacy (rather than seeking care from other providers or practising self care)?
6. How does the consultation and diagnostic performance of the pharmacist (or member of the pharmacy staff) affect patient outcome for the management of minor ailments?
7. How do pharmacists (or members of pharmacy staff) perform in terms of consultation and diagnostic behaviour during patient consultations for minor ailments?

3. The Pharmacy Practice Research Trust

The Pharmacy Practice Research Trust was established by the Royal Pharmaceutical Society of GB in July 1999 as an independent research charity with a broad objective to promote and develop the field of pharmacy practice research. Its trustees are drawn from senior health policy makers, leading academics, industry and retailers.

The Trust has invested around £2m in research; 30% supporting capacity building in pharmacy practice research and 70% on commissioned research. It receives financial support from the Leverhulme Trade Charities Trust and the Galen Trust, as well as a gift in kind from the Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain. For further information and to access reports of Trust commissioned research or for funding/grant opportunities go to: www.pprt.org.uk

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