

# MEDIA RELEASE

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## WHAT'S YOUR NHS FOOTPRINT? MAKING PEOPLE AWARE OF IMPACT OF USING GP AND A&E SERVICES FOR COUGHS AND COLDS IS KEY TO NHS SUSTAINABILITY

- **PAGB urges people to be more aware of their NHS footprint to help secure its sustainability**
- **Nearly half (46%) of people admit using GP and A&E services for minor conditions<sup>1</sup>**
- **Four in five would rethink which service to use, if they knew the impact on the NHS<sup>1</sup>**
- **82% of people are passionate about saving the NHS<sup>1</sup>**

New research exploring how people use GP and A&E services shows that if they understood their own NHS 'footprint', 80 per cent would be more likely to seek advice from pharmacists and use over-the-counter remedies for coughs, colds and other self-treatable conditions.

The Self Care Nation report<sup>1</sup> commissioned by PAGB for Self Care Week 2016 (14-20 November), explored the current attitudes of 5,011 UK adults towards self care and managing self-treatable conditions, without the need for a visit to the GP or A&E.

The research revealed that the majority of people in the UK (92 per cent) acknowledge the importance of taking responsibility for their own health in order to ease the financial burden on the NHS<sup>1</sup>. However, every year there are an estimated 57 million GP consultations and 3.7 million visits to A&E for self-treatable conditions, costing the NHS an estimated £2.3 billion<sup>2,3</sup>.

The research findings reveal that when made aware of the cost of self treatable conditions to the NHS, nearly one third of those who qualify for free prescriptions (29 per cent) said they would be willing to purchase an OTC medicine for a self-treatable condition<sup>1</sup>. Considering the NHS still spent more than £83 million on prescribing 22.6 million packs of paracetamol in 2014<sup>4</sup>, behaviour shifts like this could have a significant impact on the future sustainability of our healthcare system.

John Smith, Chief Executive of PAGB said, "Our research has uncovered a disconnect between people's good intentions and their actions when it comes to self care. The research revealed 82 per cent of the nation are passionate about saving the future of the NHS<sup>1</sup>, yet more than a third (34 per cent) admitted visiting their GP

for a self-treatable condition in the past 12 months<sup>1</sup>. Making people aware of their ‘NHS footprint’ has the potential to motivate people to change their behaviour.”

Steve Riley, community and clinical pharmacist comments, “The findings from the research are worrying. Many people are still not using the most appropriate NHS services as their first port of call. It is clear more education is needed to empower people to manage self-treatable conditions. Increasing awareness and encouraging better use of pharmacy services will help reduce demand and pressures elsewhere in the NHS. Nearly half of people (47 per cent) surveyed by PAGB said they wouldn’t visit a pharmacist for advice or treatments on self-treatable conditions<sup>1</sup> and less than one in 10 are using the wider services community pharmacies offer like flu jabs and health advice<sup>1</sup>.”

A wide range of over-the-counter medicines, available from pharmacies, supermarkets and other retail outlets, can provide relief from the symptoms of many self-treatable conditions, such as colds and headaches. People who don’t feel confident in choosing an appropriate medicine for themselves can speak to a pharmacist who can provide expert advice about self care and self-treatable conditions. Pharmacists can identify when symptoms need to be assessed by a doctor and will signpost you to other NHS services (e.g.GP, Out of Hours services or A&E) as needed. Pharmacists will also provide advice and support on a range of health and wellbeing areas.

John Smith continued, “We are urging people to be aware of their ‘NHS footprint’ and to think carefully about which NHS service is appropriate to help them with their symptoms. We are calling for greater awareness of the expertise of pharmacists and more consistent information from NHS 111, NHS Choices and across the NHS to help people make the right choice.”

**- ENDS -**

**Notes to editors:**

PAGB defines Self Care as the actions people take for themselves and their families to promote and maintain good health and wellbeing and to take care of their self-treatable conditions. To read the report in full visit [www.pagb.co.uk](http://www.pagb.co.uk)

PAGB (Proprietary Association of Great Britain) is the UK trade association representing manufacturers of branded over-the-counter medicines, self care medical devices and food supplements.

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<sup>1</sup> Survey with 5,011 UK adults, carried out by Pure Profile on behalf of PAGB. Sept 2016

<sup>2</sup> IMS Health, Minor ailment workload in general practice, 2007.

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<sup>3</sup> IMS Health study of self treatable conditions presenting in A&E units 2014. Data source: HES data. Health Episode Statistics. Re-used with the permission of the Health and Social Care Information Centre. All rights reserved.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.pagb.co.uk/self-care/self-care-read/> [last accessed October 2016]