MEDIA RELEASE

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Could pharmacies be the lifeline to our NHS? PAGB calls for pharmacies to be empowered with the tools to improve patient care and reduce pressure on NHS services

- Empowering pharmacists with write access to patient records could significantly improve continuity of care and people's overall experience of healthcare
- Joined-up approach to healthcare could save time and money for overstretched NHS
- PAGB recommends key policies to sustain our ailing health service as it hits crisis point

PAGB is today calling for pharmacists to be empowered to write in people's medical records, in a move to help improve continuity of care and join-up primary healthcare services. The recommendation is included in a new interim white paper, which calls for a national strategy for self care to realise the potential of pharmacists and highlight clear benefits to improving patient care. Empowering pharmacists to better support people to self care would provide a lifeline to the NHS in terms of saving time and money on already overstretched GP services.

Enabling write access to patient records would ensure that medication and advice or services offered to people who visit the pharmacy could be recorded consistently. In this way, information about medicines and other pharmacy services and interventions would be comprehensive and accessible across all NHS healthcare settings, facilitating continuity of care and allowing for a joined-up approach throughout the system.

Malcolm Harrison, Chief Executive from the Company Chemists' Association comments: "We fully support PAGB recommendations to empower pharmacists and pharmacy technicians with read and write access to patient records. We believe this would help to revolutionise the way in which community pharmacies work together within the rest of the NHS, whilst providing reassurance for both the individual and their healthcare professional team that information about medicines use is being checked and updated regularly."

Pharmacists should be able to write in patient records with details of medicines, treatments or interventions (such as flu jabs) they have recommended, so that GPs or other healthcare professionals can clearly see this information and take it into consideration during consultations. Not only would this provide a consistent and comprehensive record of an individual's treatment, but would also reassure people that full information about their medical history is accessible across NHS services and would ultimately reduce the workload for GPs. This could have a significant benefit for the 15 million people[1]

living with long-term conditions, in particular, who have more complex healthcare needs and may access different NHS services more frequently.

John Smith, Chief Executive of PAGB comments: "We believe that empowering pharmacists with write access to patient records would help pharmacies to work in collaboration with other NHS services. It would also help to reduce unnecessary demand, by supporting people to self care for self-treatable conditions, with confidence that any advice or medication offered by the pharmacist would be recorded. Adopting this model would mirror developments in Singapore* and Austria**, where people are already benefitting from pharmacy being more fully integrated with other parts of the healthcare system.

"Many people are unaware of the services community pharmacies offer and the expertise of pharmacists, who are able to provide advice and guidance on over-the-counter medicines and treatments. With recent prescribing restrictions for over-the-counter products, it is vital NHS England puts policies like this in place that will give people confidence to consider community pharmacies as the first port of call for advice and treatments for self-treatable conditions."

The PAGB recommendations are set out in '*A long-term vision for self care: interim white paper*', which has been developed to inform discussions on the new NHS long-term plan and recommends policies that will unlock the potential of self care.

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Notes to editors:

*Since 2011, Singapore's National Electronic Health Record (NEHR) has been used in both public and private healthcare institutions with the aim of achieving a 'one patient, one health record' vision.
The secure system collects summary patient health records across different healthcare providers, including pharmacists who have full read/write access. The Patient Medication List further supports pharmacists in medication reconciliation for patients who may visit multiple care providers. Anonymised data from the NEHR are used for research and health insights. Patients can also access part of their health record through a secure mobile app, HealthHub.

**Development of Austria's Elektronische Gesundheitsakte (ELGA) began in 2006. It collates information from a range of sources (including an electronic prescription service that allows pharmacists to check that treatments are being followed correctly), automatically identifies medicines that are likely to interact and includes medical reports and tools for sharing X-rays and test results with doctors. Patients can access the information through their mobile phone or by using their eCard, which they can hand over to health professionals to enable them to access information too. Patients can give healthcare facilities unlimited access to their record, or choose to hide specific information.

To receive a full copy of the white paper, or for further information please contact: Lauren Walker or Maria Boiling on 01273 712000 / PAGB@thisispegasus.co.uk

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.

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.
www.pagb.co.uk

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[1] https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/projects/time-think-differently/trends-disease-and-disability-long-term-conditions-multi-morbidity [last accessed August 2018]