



## Pharmacists helping Hackney to better health

Raj Radia, community pharmacist, Spring Pharmacy, Hackney, London: Influenza vaccination service

Barbara Brese, prescribing advisor, City and Hackney PCT: Asthma management service

### PHARMACY HELPING HACKNEY

Hackney may be classed as a deprived area of east London, but the pharmacists there are taking a proactive role in helping to improve the health of the residents with schemes to provide flu vaccines and to help asthma patients manage their condition better.

### VACCINES ON THE HIGH STREET

Spring Pharmacy in Hackney, run by community pharmacist Raj Radia, is part of a local group of pharmacists who are providing an influenza vaccination service in their stores, helping GPs meet their targets for immunising the over 65s and at-risk groups.

“The service was set up in 2005 because local GPs were struggling to meet their flu vaccination targets in at-risk groups – in fact, Hackney was second to bottom in the league table,” says Raj. Pharmacists were given training in administering the flu vaccine as well as resuscitation techniques should someone suffer an anaphylactic shock reaction. The majority of pharmacies in Hackney now provide the service.

### HOW THE SERVICE WORKS

“Patients can just turn up and ask for the vaccine or we can arrange a convenient appointment time, it’s up to them. The vaccination takes just a few minutes,” says Raj. “When patients come into the pharmacy for prescriptions or other services, we can take the opportunity to ask them if they’ve had their flu jab yet, and if not, if we can do it for them.” As soon as a patient has been given the vaccination, a form is filled in and sent to their GP to avoid double doses being given.

### POSITIVE FEEDBACK

“The public love the service – they don’t have to wait to see their GP or nurse for the jab – they simply come in when it’s convenient and have it done,” says Raj. The local PCT offices are just across the road from Spring Pharmacy, so all their front-line staff come in for their flu jab as well. “GPs were a little reluctant when they first heard about the scheme, as they were concerned about possible loss of revenue, but now they’ve seen it has helped them to meet their vaccination targets they’ve welcomed our services.”

### BREAKING BOUNDARIES

“At the recent Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee conference, our flu vaccine service was highlighted as a success story for pharmacy, so we’re very proud of it. I think our success proves that pharmacists have to work outside their comfort zone and push the boundaries if they want to extend their role. Services such as ours will help to convince the public that pharmacists can offer more and can play an important role in improving the health of local people,” says Raj.

### PHARMACISTS HELP TO MANAGE ASTHMA PATIENTS

Prescribing advisor Barbara Brese of City and Hackney PCT helped to set up an asthma management service through local pharmacies in Hackney after an audit of local services found that there was plenty of scope for improvement, especially in correct use of medication.



“We thought that pharmacists were best placed to offer support on the best use of medicines. They’re definitely the best people to ask about the correct use of inhalers in asthma and with pharmacies being open for longer hours than most surgeries this flexibility for patients is welcome,” says Barbara. The service was set up in August 2005, with 10 pharmacies currently involved and plans to include 45 local pharmacies by the end of 2008.

#### WHY THE SERVICE WAS NEEDED

“The management of asthma is very challenging. These patients don’t see themselves as ill and many don’t think much can be done to help their condition. Using their medication correctly is a frequent problem that we come across and this is fundamental to the good management of asthma,” explains Barbara.

“Getting a doctor’s appointment isn’t always easy and can be a barrier to these patients when seeking advice on their condition. Providing another convenient channel of advice through local pharmacies is one of the answers to improving the health of local asthma patients.”

#### HOW THE SERVICE WORKS

“Education about the condition is the key to managing it well. We use a model of the lungs to show patients how asthma occurs and how the drugs work to ease symptoms. We show them how to use inhalers correctly and help them to develop an action plan and understand how to use it properly,” says Barbara. There isn’t a formal clinic – pharmacists offer patients an individual appointment time to suit them. “We’re now getting GPs and nurses referring patients to the pharmacists for inhaler advice, which is certainly an indicator of its success.”

#### SUCCESS OF THE SERVICE

Figures to the last quarter of 2007 show that the service held around 1,300 asthma consultations in pharmacies. In an evaluation covering a three month period, patients whose asthma was previously classed as ‘not controlled’ fell from 59 per cent to 45 per cent. “We can show that the service has helped to prevent a hospital admission, and we know that good asthma management definitely improves the quality of life for these patients. We’ve also made a lot of progress in reducing the use of reliever inhalers – if asthma is managed properly these should only be rarely used,” says Barbara. When the service is extended it will also include patients with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).

#### IS THE SERVICE POPULAR?

“The patients are very comfortable seeing their pharmacist for advice on their condition. In Hackney there are many independent pharmacies and patients get to know their local pharmacist well. This helps to ensure continuity of care for their condition,” says Barbara.

“Here, GPs are supportive of pharmacists’ input in the management of long-term conditions too. Our PCT has been very supportive – they’ve allowed us to be innovative about how this service is delivered.”

#### NEW GROUND FOR PHARMACY

“I think once you can demonstrate that community pharmacists can support patient care and long-term conditions, this can then be translated to other areas such as diabetes care, which we’re looking at getting involved in next. The same skill sets are involved,” says Barbara. “Medicines management is rarely set out as a core issue when new healthcare initiatives are proposed – I think schemes such as this demonstrate that it needs to be a core issue and that pharmacy has a crucial role to play.”

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