

PRESS RELEASE



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PSNC RESPONDS TO CALL FOR JOINT WORKING TO REDUCE MEDICATION ERRORS IN CARE HOMES

07 January 2010 – On the 6 January, the Department of Health issued an alert through the NHS Central Alerting System (CAS) calling on Primary Care Trusts to “review the safety of local prescribing, dispensing, administration, and monitoring arrangements in the provision of medication to older people in care homes” and “establish a plan for effective joint working in the future, including auditing on-going progress”.

The alert referred PCTs to a recent study by Professor Nick Barber entitled "The Care Homes' Use of Medicines Study: prevalence, causes and potential harm of medication errors in care homes for older people". The study revealed a high prevalence of errors in medications received by older residents of care homes.

Responding to the alert, PSNC Chief Executive Sue Sharpe said:

“The number of medication-errors taking place in care homes is extremely concerning. Many care home residents are on highly complex courses of medication and need effective support and guidance to manage these. Dr Barber’s report identified that in many cases it’s the absence of this guidance that causes the most serious errors. It also emphasised the capacity of community pharmacy to fill these gaps.

“Community pharmacists should play a key role in ensuring that vulnerable patients are not disproportionately harmed by medication errors. Reviewing care home residents’ medication use and administration should be established as a standardised pharmacy service and PSNC will discuss with NHSE how best to achieve this. If this problem is to be tackled, community pharmacies will need to work in close partnership with GPs and care-homes to ensure care home residents receive the support and guidance they need”.

~Ends~

*For further information please contact the PSNC press office
on 0207 618 9187 or at psnc@luther.co.uk.*

Notes to Editor

1. The original Department of Health alert issued through the CAS can be found here: <https://www.cas.dh.gov.uk/ViewandAcknowledgment/ViewAlert.aspx?AlertID=101328>.
2. The study "The Care Homes' Use of Medicines Study: prevalence, causes and potential harm of medication errors in care homes for older people" was published by the Quality and Safety in Health Care Journal (Qual Saf Health Care 2009;18: 341-346) can be found here: http://www.haps.bham.ac.uk/publichealth/psrp/PS025_Project_Summary.shtml