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### **The Patients Association's Pharmacy Report November 2008**

Patients are missing out on the services that can be provided by pharmacists because of weak leadership and local professional turf wars. A survey by the Patients Association confirms that only one third of patients can see a GP within the Government's target of 48 hours and that patients are uncertain about the role of pharmacies in their frontline health services.

Among the other important findings revealed in the survey are:

- Patients are willing to use pharmacies for a wider range of health services but
- Patients find the lack of confidentiality in some pharmacies puts them off seeking the full range of advice available
- Poor management within Primary Care Trusts forces some patients to travel for up to half an hour to find a pharmacist
- Modern communications and technology are not available to patients for simple things like repeat prescriptions

Patients are ready and willing to use all the points of access to primary care but often find it impossible to do so for a variety of reasons. Ultimately each of these reasons comes down to poor management of resources by PCTs which penalises the very patients who need it most—said Katherine Murphy, Director of the Patients Association.

If you can't see a GP within 48 hours, and find it impossible to get advice from a pharmacist because of the distance or lack of confidentiality, then you are getting a pretty poor health service. If your neighbour has none of these problems, because their PCT is doing a decent job, you should be demanding change from your PCT and from your elected representatives.

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#### **Editors Note:**

##### **CALL TO ACTION**

Patients must:

- tell their local Primary Care Trust if standards of access are inadequate
- make use of the whole range of primary care professionals
- insist on proper confidentiality for all their healthcare
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Primary Care Trusts must:

- ensure sick patients have access to frontline pharmacy services regardless of postcode and to GPs within 48 hours
- manage public money properly and efficiently by ending the squabbling between local primary care professionals
- recognise the role of all primary care professionals in improving areas of health inequality

- ensure proper standards of confidentiality in all new builds especially PFIs.

GPs must:

- offer access within 48 hours to their services utilising all means of modern communication with their patients
- work constructively with pharmacists and other primary care professionals to provide a safe, seamless service for their patients
- where patients agree, share information with pharmacists for the benefit of patients

Pharmacy must:

- invest in privacy and confidentiality so that patients feel able to ask for advice, and access services
- establish a confidentiality charter covering consultation rooms, over the counter services, inter-staff discussion of patients
- work constructively with other primary care professionals to provide a safe, seamless service for their patients

Department of Health must:

- ensure contractual fairness between primary care contractors
- require Strategic Health Authorities to create equality of access for patients in their area
- require PCTs to manage all resources effectively, efficiently and creatively, using all modern means of communication with patients

**For more information please contact Katherine Murphy on 020 8423 9111.**