

'Information Therapy' As Important As Other Medical Treatments Reveals Conference - Patient Focused Healthcare Championed At Annual Event

March 1, 2006

Delegates at the annual Patient Information Forum (PiF) Conference, today heard how information therapy could prove to be as important to patient outcomes as medical tests, drugs and other treatments. Don Kemper, recognised for his visionary approach to self care in the US, gave a speech advocating the use of 'information prescriptions' which provide patients with a range of information, including personalised self-management plans, decision guides and lists of local resources, to enable them to make better decisions about their care both at home and with their doctors.

As the UK population ages and healthcare needs shift from acute short-term problems to chronic long-term conditions the need for better informed self care will increase in order to reduce the burden on NHS budgets and staff. Mr Kemper's Prescribing Information to Patients (PIP) programme has met with success in the US and may offer a means of meeting the challenges outlined by the recent Government White Paper: *Our Health, Our Care, Our Say*.¹ Presented to parliament in January, the paper focuses on the need for better management of long-term conditions and the need for greater priority to be given to self care as hospital services continue to move into community settings. It also acknowledges the need for better links between health and social care in order to meet the clear public preference for as much treatment at or as near home as possible.

The conference also highlighted that, in addition to enabling patients to become more involved in self care, doctors have an integral role to play in ensuring patients understand and respond to the advice they receive. This growing emphasis on communication was illustrated by the fact that President of the Royal College of Surgeons, Bernard Ribeiro, not only attended the conference but provided a talk on how to listen to and elicit information from patients - sending a clear message to healthcare professionals everywhere that communication is essential if patients are to fully benefit from medical advice and treatment.

Chair of the Patient Information Forum, Mark Duman, echoed these sentiments:

"Good quality information, used in the right setting, can have a dramatic impact on the quality of patient care, especially when coupled with effective communication. The Patient Information Forum is committed to developing and sharing good practice on how information can benefit patients, practitioners, carers and all those involved in healthcare. We invite all groups with a similar belief to join PiF."

The importance of effective communication in the healthcare arena was further highlighted at the conference by the launch of the new "Ask About Medicines Awards for Excellence". The awards, recognising health information excellence in five distinct categories, will be judged by a prestigious panel, with prizes to be awarded in June.

Melinda Letts, director of Ask About Medicines, commented:

“The Awards are a means of celebrating all of the great work that is being done to improve the depth and quality of medicines information and achieve better communication between patients and healthcare professionals. We are delighted to work with an organisation such as PiF, whose goals are so aligned with our own.”

To join the Patient Information Forum, please go to:

<http://www.pifonline.org.uk/membership>

To download an Ask About Medicines Awards for Excellence entry form, please go to:

<http://www.askaboutmedicines.org/awards>

About the Patient Information Forum

The Patient Information Forum, founded in 1997, is an independent group united by the common goal of developing, producing and disseminating high-quality information for patients, carers and families. Today's conference saw PiF going from strength to strength with the re-launch of their website, an increase in their membership and a range of new workshops planned for 2006. The new PiF website provides an opportunity for those involved in health information to share and develop their knowledge and expertise online. Users of the site can make use of the new In Your Area section to find out about key local resources and events, and will soon have the opportunity to join the PiF eCommunity, where they will be able to exchange information, discuss issues and seek advice from colleagues.

Further information on the Patient Information Forum, including details of the Workshops and how to become a PiF member can be found at:

<http://www.pifonline.org.uk>

About Ask About Medicines

Ask About Medicines is an independent campaign to increase people's involvement in decisions about their medicines use. It came about through a coalition of the Task Force on Medicines Partnership, the Promoting Excellence in Consumer Medicines Information Working Group and the charity Developing Patient Partnership.

References:

1. Department of Health. *Our Health, our care, our say: a new direction for community services*. Presented to Parliament by the Secretary of State for Health, January 2006.

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