

Release Date: 3rd July 2017

GPC WALES AND CPW SIGN MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING TO IMPROVE UPTAKE OF FLU VACCINATION

BMA Cymru Wales' GP committee (GPC Wales) and Community Pharmacy Wales (CPW) have signed an agreement to encourage collaborative working, designed to improve the uptake of the NHS Flu vaccination.

The 'Memorandum of Understanding', has been developed to improve the uptake of qualifying patients accessing existing NHS flu vaccination services during the 2017/18 season, with the aim of achieving the 75% target set by Welsh Government.

The agreement is to encourage a truly collaborative approach, whereby GPs and pharmacists work together to ensure all those eligible for the flu vaccination can access it.

Key recommendations for GPs set out in the memorandum include:

- ensuring all staff are aware of who is eligible for a free flu vaccination and where this can be given;
- including community pharmacy flu vaccination provision in flu planning discussions at primary care cluster meetings and considering how cluster practices, nursing teams and community pharmacies can engage and vaccinate those who routinely decline flu vaccination, and reaching other vulnerable groups to enhance take up levels;
- informing community pharmacies when in-house vaccine supplies have been exhausted; and
- Signposting patients who state they cannot attend flu vaccination clinics to community pharmacies.

Dr Charlotte Jones, Chair GPC Wales, said:

"This agreement is another important step in the right direction towards collaborative working. It's about pharmacists encouraging patients to attend their GP practice routinely for flu vaccination services, with pharmacists focussing on the hard to reach groups and those who clearly state they will not attend their GP surgery for vaccination.

"It ensures the lines of communication between GPs and community pharmacists in Wales remain firmly open, with patients' health as a shared priority.

“It also embraces the principles of prudent healthcare by promoting NHS flu vaccination services, with patients taking a more pro-active approach to self-care. It acknowledges the need to respect patient choice about how and when and they access such services, if they choose to.”

Key recommendations for community pharmacies set out in the memorandum include:

- community pharmacies informing the local GP practices as soon as possible that they are intending to offer flu vaccination during 2017/18;
- ensuring that all pharmacy staff are made aware of who is entitled to a free flu vaccination and where this can be given;
- encouraging patients who already have appointments made at GP practices to keep those appointments;
- targeting patients under 65 years of age in the "at risk" groups and those who do not routinely get vaccinated; and
- Immunising individuals aged 65 years or over where the community pharmacist considers that the patient is unlikely to attend a GP practice for vaccination.

Mark Griffiths, Chair of Community Pharmacy Wales, said:

“Year on year, pharmacies have played a greater role in providing flu vaccinations and we are delighted to have come to this agreement with the BMA. This voluntary compact between pharmacist and doctor puts the patient at its very heart, allowing more people to get vaccinated. It also demonstrates that health professionals can work together in Wales in a way that meets the Welsh Government objectives for maximising access while at the same time taking the pressure off GPs.

“By co-ordinating better in the primary care sector, we can also take the pressure off hospitals and reduced costs. There were 779 admissions for flu to Welsh hospitals last year, of which 125 people ended up in high dependency units. I’m confident that with proper co-ordination and increased vaccine uptake we can also alleviate the pressure on our hospitals too, which is again in line with the objectives of the Welsh Government and the broader health community.”

ENDS

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Notes to editor

The memorandum of understanding is not intended to be legally binding.

BMA Cymru Wales is the doctors' professional organisation established to look after the professional and personal needs of its members. The BMA represents doctors in all branches all over the UK.

Community Pharmacy Wales represents the 700 plus pharmacy owners in Wales on NHS matters. Their main objective is to secure the best possible NHS service opportunities, remuneration and terms. They are the body responsible for liaising with the Department of Health and for negotiating the contractual terms for the provision of the NHS community pharmacy services.