

Reducing Medicines Waste

Concordance and Medicines Waste

Whilst the NHS has developed good systems to support front-line professionals in making cost effective prescribing decisions, it has been less successful at involving patients as partners in those decisions or in giving them extra assistance if needed to get the most out of their medicines. As a result medicines may not be used as intended leading to considerable avoidable ill health and waste (Audit Commission Dec 2001)

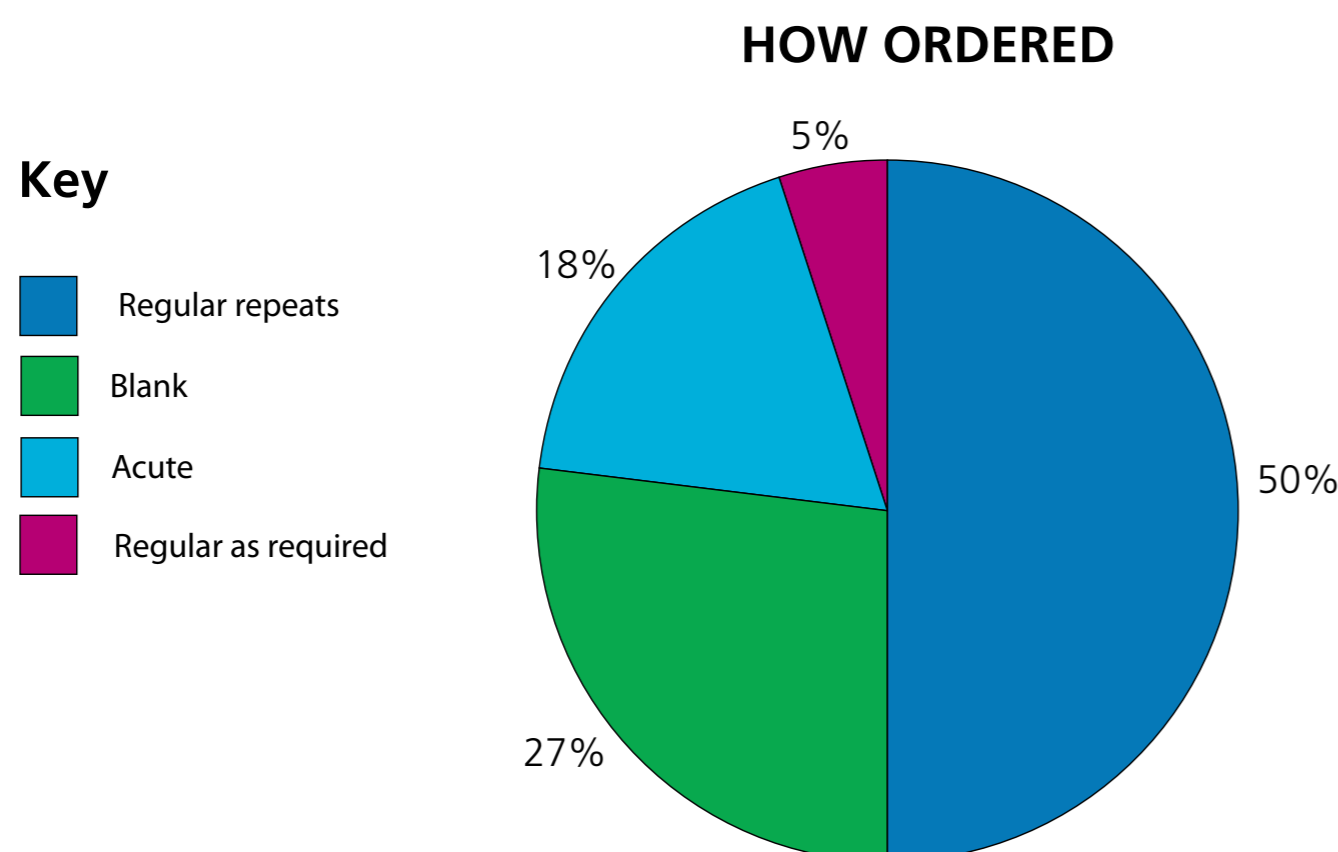
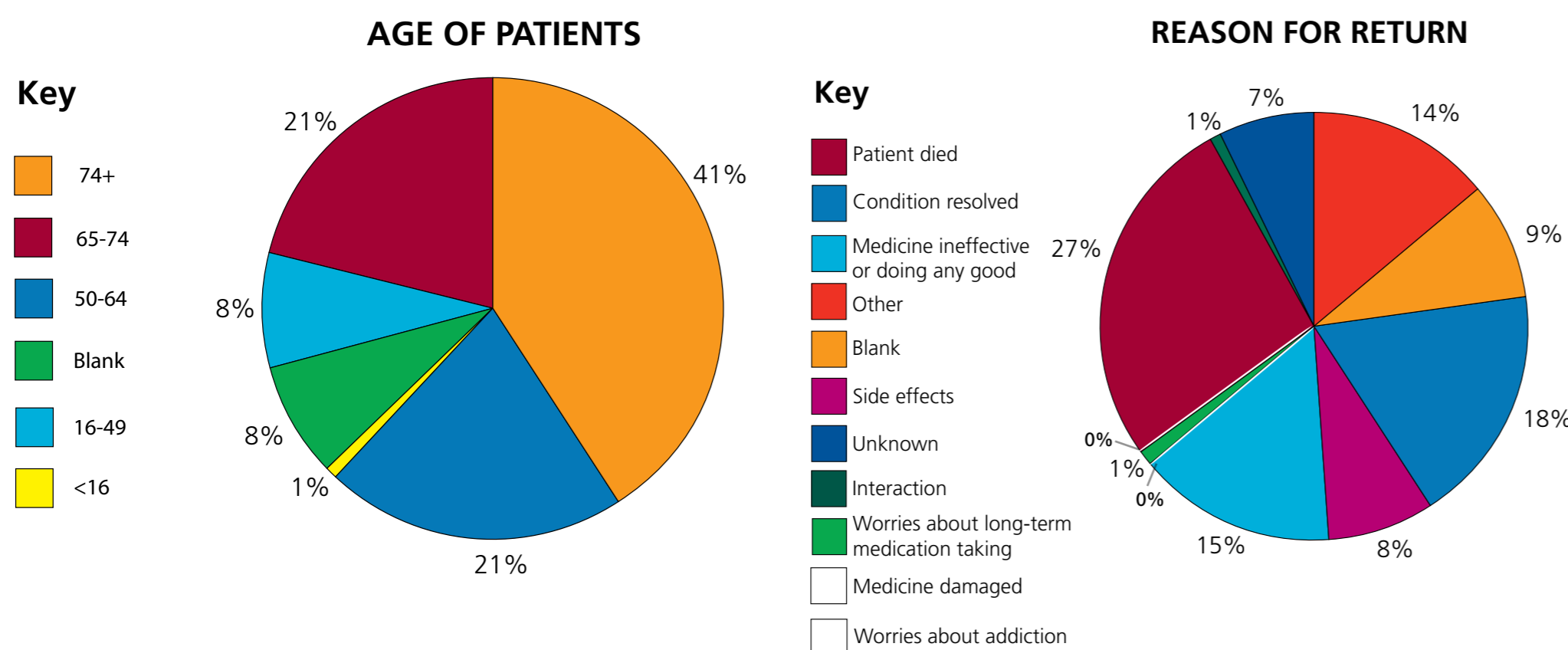
There is strong evidence that many people still do not take their medication as prescribed even when not doing so can have life-threatening consequences.

Many reasons are given by patients for returning unwanted medicines, some of which are avoidable and some are unavoidable.

Unavoidable medication waste	Avoidable medication waste
Death of patient	Too much stock at home (stockpiling)
Medication no longer required as changed by prescriber	Error in prescription production
Adverse effect from medication	Error in ordering items and continuing to order stopped items
Medicines stopped by patient	Error in supply

Results from Disposal of Old Pharmaceuticals (DUMP) campaign in Craven/Harrogate

41% of all returns were for medication dispensed to patients aged 74 years and over
50% of returns were ordered on regular repeat
31% of all returned drugs were returned unopened



Analysis of types of medications returned was as follows:

Section	Items returned (%)
Cardiovascular	26%
Central Nervous System	12%
Gastrointestinal	12%
Analgesic	9%
NSAID	6%
Respiratory	5%
Antibiotic	4%
External	4%
Vitamin and mineral	4%
Diabetic	3%
Other	15%

The most common problems leading to stockpiling of medicines:

- Drugs no longer required and patient not informing GP
- Not taking as prescribed and patient not informing GP
- Inappropriate directions
- Inconsistent qualities
- Patient worrying about running out of medicines
- Patient not recognising names of medicines or remembering what they are for

North Yorkshire and York Minimising Medicines Waste Campaign

KEY MESSAGES

- Medicines returned to pharmacies cannot be reused, even if unopened
- Tell your doctor or pharmacist if you have stopped taking any of your medicines or take in a different way to as prescribed
- Don't order what you don't need, check what medicines you still have at home before ordering
- Discuss your medication with your pharmacist or GP on a regular basis

David Gill (right), Chair of the North Yorkshire Local Pharmaceutical Committee (LPC) runs pharmacies in Tadcaster and York. He said: **"We are getting behind this campaign 100 per cent. Pharmacists see thousands of pounds worth of medicines returned unused as waste every year."**



KEY ACTIONS:

- The campaign to be ongoing (not just for a limited time span as in most other campaigns)
- Campaign materials to be consistent, i.e. same logo and messages
- Themed display boards to be used in GP practices and supported by the presence of member of PCT Medicines Management team to be available to patients to answer queries
- Leaflets provided to community pharmacies and dispensing practices for attachment to prescription bags
- Community pharmacists carrying out a Medicines Use Review to be encouraged to ask patients if they have stock of medicines at home
- GP Practice staff carrying out a Medicines Review are encouraged to ask patients if they have stock of medicines at home
- Posters in various settings including on public transport
- Key messages on touch screens in GP practices to be encouraged
- PCT, GP practice and community pharmacy websites to display messages around medication waste
- Synchronised quantities on repeat facilitate the ordering process
- 'Starting young' of benefit, encouraging and increasing confidence to discuss their medication with their GP. Include safety of medicines into schools programmes
- Audit of medicines waste from Care Homes with follow up advice and educational sessions from PCT Care Homes Pharmacists
- Voluntary agencies to support the campaign by displaying materials and promoting the message in discussion groups and at group coffee times
- PCT Medicines Management team to facilitate discussions with patient forums, patient groups etc
- Media coverage to include press and local radio

Don't waste medicines



- Waste medicines cost the NHS up to £800 million a year.
- Tell your doctor or pharmacist if you are not taking your medicines exactly as prescribed. Your doctor makes a diagnosis based on your condition assuming you have been taking your medication as prescribed.
- Once medicines are prescribed, they cannot be re-used and have to be incinerated – even if they are unopened.
- Don't order what you don't need – check your supply before ordering more. Discuss your medicines on a regular basis with your GP or pharmacist.

CUTTING DOWN WASTE MEDICINES IN NORTH YORKSHIRE



Sue M Dale, Principal Pharmacist

North Yorkshire and York