



News Release

Don't dare to share leftover medication

Cold and flu and back to school bugs may see queues at surgeries surge but that is no excuse to hand children your own outdated pills and potions – claims a national charity.

A recent survey from the United States has shown that 73% of parents who'd kept medications had shared them with their children.

And with increases in measles and scarlet fever swelling surgeries to bursting point, **Antibiotic Research UK** (ANTRUK) is deeply concerned that distressed parents will do the same here – and play Russian Roulette with their offspring's health.

“The pain you'll feel watching your child suffer with a sore throat is as nothing compared to what will happen if you give them outdated and inappropriate medicine” revealed Professor Colin Garner, founder and chief executive of ANTRUK. “They might be allergic to some of its components, have side-effects that could prove deadly, see their kidneys or other major organs fail and in the case of antibiotics, make bacteria in their body resistant to the drug and leave them prone to death from a superbug.”

A recent study by The Times newspaper showed that some patients were waiting up to NINE WEEKS to see their family doctor (1). This could lead worried parents and relatives of vulnerable people to take their loved ones to already rammed Accident and Emergency departments. Facing the prospect of a long wait here, some then might be tempted to turn to dangerous alternatives, including:

- Looking up symptoms on the internet and self-diagnosing

- Buying quack solutions on the web and,
- Sharing residual medications left lying about the house

“This is the result of a desperate population who now believe they cannot see their doctor” said Dr Anita Sharma, an Oldham GP backing ANTRUK, “but instead of panicking or taking matters in to their own hands, they ought to explore other legitimate options. Their pharmacy or out-of-hours service may be able to help. There is also the 111 phone line and the only patient site I would give credence to, NHS Choices.

I too am disappointed in the lack of resource going into primary care but patients should never self-medicate – particularly with out-of-date antibiotics. They could end up killing a loved one.”

Antibiotic resistance occurs when bacteria in our bodies becomes averse to the good effects of the drug. Taking too many antibiotics or using inappropriate ones increases your chances of developing resistance and then succumbing to an infection. Experts are warning that 10 million people will die of antibiotic resistant infections by 2050 and Colin Garner had a particularly salient warning for the public this year.

“In amongst the illnesses that are making an unwelcome impact this winter are pneumonia , TB and dysentery; things that we treated with antibiotics and which most of us thought belonged to history. Some of the drugs don't work any more and this illustrates how gigantic the problem of antibiotic resistance has become.

Until such time as we develop effective new medications, we have to manage antibiotics properly, take the right dose at the right time if clinically indicated.”

Dr Sharma concluded: “The NHS will never refuse to see someone who is an emergency. Extended opening hours, better triaging and even smart online appointment schemes are attempting to shorten waiting times. Yes, demand exceeds supply and we are struggling but don't make that situation even more dire by playing at doctor. Never, ever share medication.”

ANTRUK is the only charity in the world solely dedicated to saving modern medicine and defeating drug-resistant infections. It is aiming to alternatives to current antibiotics and

support patients living with superbugs. To donate to the charity, visit

<https://www.antibioticresearch.org.uk/>

- Ends -

- (1) <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/gp-crisis-nhs-shortages-mean-one-doctor-has-to-care-for-11-000-patients-v25nt2cdl>

For further information

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