

## More Than Cutting Carbon

The NHS is set to cut carbon emissions by 80% by 2050<sup>1</sup>

RCGP published a sustainability policy in 2014

**Sustainability in healthcare is about meeting "the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs"<sup>2</sup>.**

GP teams provide holistic patient care at all stages of life.

GPs run their own practices, employ staff and are in charge of commissioning.

So we really can make changes that will improve the resilience of:

Ourselves, our patients, our staff, and our planet.



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# Go Green for 2015

## Top Tips for General Practice Teams



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# More Than Cycling & Recycling

## Sustainability can...

Save us time and money



Improve patient care



And it's Green



## INHALERS

Metered dose inhalers (MDI) alone account for 5% of the entire NHS carbon footprint. 63% end up in landfill sites, via patients' domestic waste<sup>3</sup>. Prescribe more dry powder inhalers as these have a carbon footprint 1/18th of MDI and are equally as effective<sup>4</sup>.

GlaxoSmithKline's "Complete The Cycle" scheme recycles all types of inhalers from all companies<sup>5</sup>.

## SINGLE USE MEDICAL EQUIPMENT

Making & disposing of single use medical equipment uses energy & produces emissions. Some equipment including gloves & surgical equipment are produced in developing countries with sub-standard conditions & poor human rights<sup>6</sup>.

What can we do? **REPLACE, RE-USE, RECYCLE**

For Example:

Switch to a metal multiuse speculum instead of discarding plastic.

Use the No-Touch Technique instead of sterile equipment for example when inserting contraceptive implants.

Wash & reuse otoscope ear pieces and inhaler teaching devices.

Tradebe & SRCL recycle the steel from single use metal implements, which is a 40% cost saving compared to incineration<sup>7</sup>.

## A GREENER DEATH

While 89% of patients wish to die at home or in a hospice, 53% actually die in hospital<sup>8</sup>.

70% of people are cremated in the UK.

Cremation heats the body to over 1000°C for 2 hours and releases mercury into the environment<sup>9</sup>.

Use care planning initiatives for example Palliative Care Gold Standards Framework and Unplanned Admissions Enhanced Service.

Encourage and guide the making of advance decisions.

Advanced Directives & DNAR forms can also prevent unnecessary hospital admissions<sup>10</sup>.

## REDUCE MEDICINE WASTE

80-90% of medication is prescribed in primary care<sup>11</sup>.

Medication returned to the chemist cannot be reused even if the packet is unopened.

£300 million pounds worth of medication goes unused each year<sup>12</sup>.

Educate Patients to **only order what they need**.

Educate Prescribers - Ask **what's in store before prescribing more**.

The Green Bag scheme. Patients' are being encouraged to take all their own medicines in their original containers in a Green Bag to hospital, care home or medication review.

Side effects are worst & new medications are likely to be discontinued in the first 2 weeks (think statins, antihypertensives, antidepressants) – consider initially prescribing for 2 Weeks.

Think **Alternatives** - For example nasal douching has been shown to be effective for treating chronic sinusitis and is well tolerated.

## SELF-CARE AND WELLBEING

'Minor' and social problems costs General Practice £2billion or 57 million consultations a year.

The effect of loneliness and isolation on mortality is worse than obesity, and has a similar influence as smoking about 15 cigarettes a day<sup>13</sup>.

### EMPOWER

Encourage and empower patients to look after themselves:

Give web addresses for Patient Information Leaflets, use online Option Grids for comparing treatment options, recommend NHS Smartphone applications (apps) such as headache diary app.

### WELLBEING

It has been shown that by increasing a patient's sense of wellbeing, you decrease the amount of time they feel ill.

Five Aspects of Wellbeing:

- Be Active (physical activity)
- Connect (being part of a network/community)
- Take Notice (positive affirmation)
- Keep Learning (seeking new experiences)
- Give (expressions of generosity/kindness<sup>14</sup>)

GPs and patients are increasingly reliant on voluntary sector organisations for support.

## ECO-COMMUNICATION

Paper based communication and face to face meetings cost money & use energy.

Encourage patient queries by telephone & email.

Try using skype/teleconferencing for meetings.

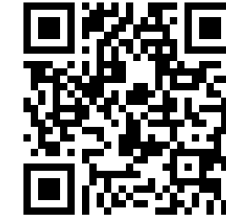
Use a lap top or tablet for taking notes. Electronic notes can be directly uploaded to portfolios and colleagues, saving time and money!

Hospital communications and prescriptions are becoming electronic - try not to print them out

Contracts & official documentation no longer needs to be printed to be signed. The Electronic Communications Act 2000 recognises the use of electronic signatures<sup>15</sup>.

Paper made from recovered fibres uses 60-70% less energy, 50% less water & prevents the original paper from going to landfill<sup>16</sup>.

The Go Green for 2015 handout is available online, follow the QR code.



## HEALTHY DIET—HEALTH PLANET

Food production accounts for 30% of the world's greenhouse gases<sup>17</sup>.

70% of agricultural land and 9% of global water consumption is used producing animal based food, especially Beef & Lamb<sup>18</sup>. In UK we eat on average 79kg of meat a year & also on average 1000 too many calories a day<sup>19</sup>.

Plant powered:

Recommend a reduced animal product diet (less than 1/3rd dairy and meat).

Plant based diets reduce cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, obesity & some forms of cancer, are more sustainable, and costs the patient £4 less per week.

