A Fair Deal for All NHS Patients

The difficulties faced by patients across the UK in gaining access to modern medicines is a longstanding problem, leading to political debate and media articles, often citing challenging personal testimonials.

Analysis from the Office of Health Economics (OHE) in 2013 confirmed that the UK lags behind comparable countries in terms of use of branded medicines. This followed on from The International Variations in Drug Usage Report which, worryingly, showed that for patients suffering from a range of conditions, including cancer, dementia, hepatitis C, multiple sclerosis and rheumatoid arthritis, the UK had fallen behind most countries with similar economies and health systems.

Now, in 2014, Professor David Haslam, chairman of the National Institute of Health and Care Excellence (NICE) has actively encouraged patients to become more assertive with their clinicians, highlighting that “when products have been approved for use on the NHS by NICE, patients have a legal right to those medicines - as long as they are clinically appropriate. The take-up should be much higher than it currently is.” Similarly, recent concerns regarding access to medicines and treatments in Scotland have spurred both the Scottish Parliament and Scottish Government into action. They have made clear their intention to improve access to new medicines for patients at the end of life, or with rare conditions.

As a result, the Scottish Health Secretary, Alex Neil MSP, has recently introduced changes to enhance the new medicines approval process in Scotland to ensure that “improved access becomes a reality for patients.”

In Wales, the public also seem very aware of issues with the availability of treatments.

In a recent YouGov Survey, commissioned by the Welsh NHS Confederation and ABPI Cymru Wales, well over a quarter of the respondents (28%) were aware of issues regarding the availability of medicines or treatments, which had affected them, either personally, their family or their friends.

Indeed, the survey showed that only 5% of the Welsh public don’t think there are any issues relating to the availability of medicines or treatments in Wales.

There may not always be simple solutions to such longstanding issues as this. However, the ABPI has delivered, with the UK Government, a new five-year pricing agreement to help ensure that patients across the UK, including Wales, get the medicines they need, when they need them, at no additional cost.

Under this new arrangement, the pharmaceutical industry has agreed to keep expenditure on branded medicines flat for two years. During this time, the pharmaceutical industry will underwrite any extra expenditure in the use of branded medicines by the NHS, within agreed boundaries. This means that the issue of affordability of newer innovative medicines has been taken off the table for the NHS.

This should mean that doctors will be allowed to prescribe branded medicines more freely to patients who need them.

This agreement demonstrates the industry’s commitment to improving outcomes for patients in Wales, but the deal cannot fix the longstanding problems by itself.

In this issue

- A Fair Deal for All NHS Patients
- Recognising the True Value of Medicines
- Johnson & Johnson Innovation: Network of Partnering Offices in UK Life Sciences Clusters
- BLF Wales and ABPI Cymru Wales Respiratory Therapy Group invite you to: ‘Lung Health Going Forward in Wales’
- Medicines Knowledge Base at National Assembly for Wales
- BioWales 2014 – Opportunities & Support in Wales
- Opportunities and Challenges for the Pharmaceutical Sector across Wales
- National Assembly for Wales Health and Social Care Committee – Inquiry into Access to Medical Technologies
- Meet Judith Hickey, Chair of the North Wales Therapy Group
A Fair Deal for All NHS Patients continued.

Concerted and co-ordinated action is now needed by the Welsh Government, NHS Wales, alongside bodies such as the All Wales Medicines Strategy Group (AWMSG), to ensure that patients in Wales get the best quality healthcare they deserve.

The ABPI has, therefore, welcomed the announcement of two reviews by the Welsh Government and awaits the outcomes with interest. These reviews have been asked to consider access to medicines developed for rare disease, known as orphan and ultra-orphan medicines, and the scope and function of the Individual Patient Funding Request (IPFR) process - both areas which have come under intense political and media scrutiny over recent times. The outcomes of these reviews are fundamental to how the benefits of medicines are valued and will dictate whether a particular medicine is available for patients in Wales.

We are hopeful that the Welsh Government responses will harness and sustain the spread of innovation throughout NHS Wales, increasing transparency and removing unfair discrepancies with other parts of the UK - and the rest of the world.

Only by ensuring the delivery of change and transparency across NHS Wales, alongside the benefits provided by the capped cost of branded medicines, can we all avoid the headlines of the past.

Johnson & Johnson Innovation: Network of Partnering Offices in UK Life Sciences Clusters

Johnson & Johnson Innovation is committed to identifying and building early-stage collaborations with academics, entrepreneurs and emerging companies to accelerate the development of new healthcare solutions for patients and has established four regional centres - located in California, Boston, London and Shanghai – to achieve this.

Johnson & Johnson Innovation, London is committed to finding and developing the best science and playing an active role in advancing the life science ecosystem in the UK and Europe. As part of this, the London centre has established a network of partnering offices across UK life science clusters. These offices function as extensions of the London Innovation Centre to work with academics and entrepreneurs at life science “hot-spots” throughout the UK. One of these hot-spots is in Wales, where the base will be at the Life Sciences Hub in Cardiff Bay and will cover the whole of Wales and the South West of England.

The Hub, which will open in July, 2014, will be a focal point for the sector in Wales, stimulating interaction, innovation, networking and collaboration, and facilitating jobs and investment. It will be a central hub for the whole of the life sciences sector including academic, business, clinical and funding organisations.
Recognising the True Value of Medicines

We were delighted to be able to support the Welsh NHS Confederation to undertake, through YouGov, their recent Survey of public opinion from across Wales on the range of services offered by NHS Wales.

Taking an independent measurement of the temperature and pulse of the views of the citizens of Wales can provide a useful insight as to its priorities and expectations. Understanding how the public sees the delivery of care is fundamental to allowing the Welsh Government and NHS Wales make appropriate changes to the future delivery of services, as well as allowing them to be implemented in a consistent and considered way.

This Survey also gave us the opportunity to ask the Welsh public how they feel about the discovery and value of innovative medicines and treatments. What is clear from the Survey is that people in Wales are acutely aware of the positive contribution that medicines make to their health and wellbeing. Of the respondents, 92% believed medicines make an important (62%) or limited (30%) contribution to good health and perhaps equally as important, only 2% of the population believe that medicines make no contribution to continuing good health.

Of course, there are many factors involved in keeping people well – and supporting patients to get better quickly when they become ill. We all admire and rely on the healthcare professionals making difficult decisions every day in the treatment of their patients and the myriad of other innovative treatments that deliver better health.

However, when we look at developments in health and wellbeing, life expectancy and quality of life, we see that the pharmaceutical industry, with its medicines and vaccines, is responsible for a large part of that progress. Vaccines alone have prevented more death and disease than anything except the provision of clean water. Smallpox has been eradicated. Polio is virtually eliminated in the developed world. The value of these and other key treatments should never be underestimated.

Diseases that used to be killers no longer carry that threat. Leukemia, if diagnosed early, can be driven into remission with a once-daily treatment. Cardiovascular disease, which not many years ago often resulted in bypass surgery, can now be managed easily with tablets. Improvements in cancer treatment have cut annual death rates by half.

As well as the value to individuals, the industry also provides great value to society. It keeps people in work and out of hospital. That alone should put the industry’s value balance sheet in profit.

At a time when there is a fundamental change needed in the configuration of services by NHS Wales, the role and value of medicines could be key to its future. In America, where their insurance based health system is acutely aware of ensuring a “bang for its buck”, for every dollar spent on prescription medicines, more than two dollars are saved in hospitalisation costs. In some instances, the efficiencies are even greater, for example for every $24 spent on new medicines for Cardio-Vascular Disease savings of $89 in hospitalisation costs are made.

Perhaps NHS Wales needs to better accept that medicines can represent a saving to their systems and they’re not simply a cost to be squeezed, which is how they are often managed. Indeed, this was a message rehearsed by the Minister for Health, Mark Drakeford, AM in the Assembly only last week; that access to medicines leads to “the avoidance of treatment—expensive treatment…”

Wales needs to ensure that short term cost considerations and pressures across our healthcare system do not undermine the potential of longer term efficiencies. This will have a net result that long term healthcare costs will actually increase: patients will not get early access to innovative medicines as Wales continues to slip down the table of innovative medicines use.

The pharmaceutical industry recognises the financial challenges facing healthcare across the UK and has stepped up to the plate by agreeing to underwrite any increase in the UK branded medicines bill for two years. Here in Wales, we have called on the Welsh Government and NHS Wales to respond positively to this unique opportunity to demonstrate their active commitment to improving patients’ access to the latest medicines. We have five years to fix the access problems so that patients get the best quality healthcare they deserve and the medicines they obviously value.

It is important that all the sectors involved in supporting patients – the Welsh Government, NHS Wales, patient organisations and industries such as ours – work together to make the necessary changes to healthcare – and deliver the healthcare system our patients value and deserve.
Medicines Knowledge Base
at National Assembly
for Wales

Reflecting its on-going commitment to work with the National Assembly for Wales to raise knowledge of medicines processes and highlight any issues or example of best practice, ABPI Cymru Wales invited Professor Malcolm Mason, Cancer Research Wales Professor of Clinical Oncology, Dean of Research in Life Sciences, Cardiff University and Director of the Wales Cancer Bank to the Senedd on the 19th March 2014 to participate in the latest Medicines Knowledge Base Programme meeting. Professor Mason presented on “Stratified Medicines” to an audience drawn from across the Assembly. Following his presentation, Professor Mason took questions from the assembled audience and discussed his experiences of working with new treatments.

BioWales 2014
– Opportunities
& Support in Wales

BioWales 2014 took place in Cardiff on the 6th & 7th March, focusing on growth and delivery within the Life Sciences sector and on the opportunities and support available to new investors and established companies in Wales.

Dr. Louise Leong, Director of Research and Development at ABPI presented to the Conference on “Addressing the Translational Gap”, which highlighted the ABPI priorities on maintaining a leading environment for the discovery and development of new innovative medicines, and maximising the impact of industry’s investment in R&D. Also presenting were Professor Sir Chris Evans, who focused on the Arthurian Life Sciences Fund of £100million and its recent investments and Professor Chris McGuigan who updated delegates on the Life Sciences Hub Wales, which he described as a “true Dragons’ Den” for anyone with a realistic life science business.

Opportunities and Challenges
for the Pharmaceutical Sector
across Wales

The ABPI and Life Science Exchange team, based at LS2, Swansea University, hosted an event on the 10th February in South Wales, attended by colleagues from the pharmaceutical industry, academia, Welsh Government and NHS Wales. The event aimed to discover the range of opportunities and challenges within the Welsh pharmaceutical sector, the resources available and provide a networking opportunity for those involved.

Following presentations by representatives from across Wales, including Professor Marc Clements, Swansea University (pictured), an animated panel discussion closed the event with questions ranging from the role of the Welsh Government in supporting entrepreneurship to the current opportunities for the industry to work with NHS Wales.
BLF Wales and ABPI Cymru Wales Respiratory Therapy
Group invite you to: ‘Lung Health Going Forward in Wales’

On April 29 the British Lung Foundation in Wales and the
ABPI Cymru Wales Respiratory Sub Group are holding an
open event from midday until 2pm in the Oriel space at the
Senedd sponsored by Rebecca Evans AM. The Health Minister,
Professor Mark Drakeford, has accepted our invitation to use the
event to formally launch the Respiratory Health Delivery Plan.
We are hoping that as many people as possible will attend so
that we may begin to explore how best we can all work together
to implement the key actions within the Plan. Lung health in
Wales is a big issue – not only for those who suffer from poor
lung health but for the Health service itself. By bringing a
diverse audience together, Government Officials, Health Care
Professionals, Patient and Patient groups, Industry Members
and Assembly members we hope to facilitate the best of
practice, co-production and lateral thinking so that we can make
the best of this opportunity.

If you would like to join us please RSVP to:
Chris Mulholland Head of BLF Wales Chris.Mulholland@blf.org.uk or on 01792 455764

The event is financially supported in accordance with the ABPI
Code of Practice for the Pharmaceutical Industry. British Lung
Foundation Wales is grateful for the support given on this
occasion by the ABPI Cymru Respiratory Sub group which
comprises the following companies – AstraZeneca, Boehringer
Ingelheim, GSK, Napp Pharmaceuticals, Novartis and Pfizer

BLF is a charity registered in England and Wales, charity
number 326730

National Assembly for Wales Health and Social Care
Committee – Inquiry into Access to Medical Technologies

On Wednesday, 22nd January, ABPI Cymru Wales gave evidence to the National Assembly for Wales Health and Social Care
Committee as part of their Inquiry into Access to Medical Technologies in Wales. Although access to medicines is outside the scope
of the Inquiry, the Committee was keen to hear about the lessons learnt from AWMSG’s medicines appraisal process in Wales. ABPI
took the opportunity to highlight the benefits of an evolving, robust and transparent National Assessment process but also explained
the challenges of consistent implementation and local adoption by referring to the current issues with uptake of medicines in Wales.
Karen Samuels from the All Wales Medicines Strategy Group had earlier provided evidence and highlighted the importance of
ongoing dialogue with the pharmaceutical industry.

The full evidence session is available via the Internet:
ABPI Cymru Wales Bulletin

Spring 2014 Edition 08

Meet Judith Hickey, Chair of the North Wales Therapy Group

Judith is a Health Economy Account Manager working for GlaxoSmithKline in Wales. Judith’s role is to engage with the people in Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board who make decisions and influence patient’s access to medicines and who shape the delivery of healthcare for the people of North Wales. She says that fundamental to this relationship is building trust and forging valued partnerships driven by putting the patient first in everything we do.

Judith was born in Ebbw Vale in South Wales and after training and working in London started her career in Wales as an A&E nursing sister in Ysbyty Gwynedd in Bangor, moving into the Pharmaceutical Industry in 1993. She lives in the Vale of Clwyd in North Wales, is married to Malcolm and they have three children now in their twenties but life is still hectic and fun with dogs, horses and chickens as well as a new cycling hobby building up to completing a London to Paris cycle challenge in June.

“I think if my colleagues had to choose one word to describe what I bring to my work it would be tenacity and hopefully humour....well that’s two! I have represented GSK on the North Wales Industry Therapy Group for many years, for the last two years as Vice-Chair and now Chair. I will bring my tenacity and passion for building trust with people, to the role to build on the great work done by Sue Griffiths, previous Chair. I want to improve the profile of the Industry in North Wales through increasing understanding of each others’ roles and challenges between the Industry and our colleagues in Betsi Cadwaladr and I am confident that this will build trust and value for us all.”

Who we are

The ABPI represents innovative research-based biopharmaceutical companies, large, medium and small, leading an exciting new era of biosciences in the UK.

Our industry, a major contributor to the economy of the UK, brings life-saving and life-enhancing medicines to patients. Our members supply 90 per cent of all medicines used by the NHS, and are researching and developing over two-thirds of the current medicines pipeline, ensuring that the UK remains at the forefront of helping patients prevent and overcome diseases.

The ABPI is recognised by government as the industry body negotiating on behalf of the branded pharmaceutical industry, for statutory consultation requirements including the pricing scheme for medicines in the UK.

For further information about any of the issues in this Bulletin or about ABPI Cymru Wales, please contact:

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