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British Consumers Are Ready To Self-Care – Or Are They?

by David Ridley

A new survey from UK consumer healthcare industry association PAGB shows an increased willingness to self-care on the part of British consumers. However, a different survey from Perrigo shows pharmacists less sure about their customers' ability to self-care responsibly.

A recent survey by UK consumer industry association PAGB shows a significant rise in the willingness of British consumers to turn to pharmacy for minor ailments.

Pharmacists, however, are not so sure. A survey by Perrigo Plc highlights “significant concerns” among UK healthcare professionals (HCPs) with regards to the British public’s ability to treat common ailments and minor health issues themselves.

PAGB’s UK-wide survey of more than 2,000 people asked respondents about their attitudes to self-care and accessing health services in the 12 months to June 2021, when coronavirus-related lockdown measures were in force to varying degrees.

The poll found that 47% of respondents would turn to their local pharmacist for “initial advice or medication” for a self-treatable condition – up from 37% in 2020.

More than one in four (27%) said the pandemic had changed their attitude towards self-care, PAGB reports, compared with 24% when the association last surveyed the British public.

PAGB CEO Michelle Riddalls said that the findings “underline the contribution and expertise of pharmacists in supporting self-care and in helping to ease pressure on National Health Service resources such as general practitioner (GP) appointments.”

“We want to ensure that the shift towards appropriate self-care witnessed during the pandemic is maintained, and there is no doubt that pharmacists have a key role to play in achieving that

goal,” she continued.

Perrigo Survey Highlights HCPs' Concerns

Perrigo’s research, on the other hand, reveals that more than two fifths (44%) of UK HCPs don’t believe that the British public is effective at looking after itself.

Commenting on this finding, Perrigo UK & Ireland’s senior marketing director, Laure de Brauer, said that the concern is “widespread and not without good reason.”

“Consumers appear to be increasingly curious about self-care and are starting to develop more prevention-based attitudes, but the UK's views still lag behind other European countries,” she explained.

“As a nation, we need to do more to educate people about preventing illness, proactively protecting their health, and managing minor ailments so they don't escalate, and in turn, boosting overall well-being,” she added.

Based on a poll of 203 pharmacists and general practitioners, Perrigo's survey also questioned HCPs about consumers' mental health. Three quarters of HCPs polled said they had seen an increase in mental health related queries during the past 12 months.