

Dr John McAnaw
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Clinical Lead Realistic Medicine
NHS 24



May 2021

Dear Colleagues,

Supporting positive conversations with patients – “It’s OK to ask”.

We are writing to let you know about an upcoming campaign to support patients and healthcare professionals in having positive conversations about care and treatment. The campaign will run across the NHS in Scotland from mid May 2021 and has been devised with input from NHS clinicians.

Background

Realistic Medicine puts the person receiving health and care at the centre of decision-making and encourages a personalised approach to their care. As you may have experienced, most people don’t usually take the opportunity to ask about their treatment. In fact research shows only 1 in 3 patients prepare questions to ask at their appointment. They may leave a consultation unclear on the importance and impact of taking a prescribed medication, or without a clear understanding of the options they have for shaping or managing their own healthcare.

The Chief Medical Officer’s Annual Report 2016-17 identified that ‘question prompts’ are an effective and inexpensive intervention. These prompts support patients in becoming more involved in consultations and their own healthcare.

Actions

We have developed resources for the NHS and the public to raise awareness of the importance and benefits of these questions and to encourage patients to ask them during consultations. We hope that you, and your patients, find these resources helpful.

What is the one thing we are saying?

“It’s Ok to ask.”

The questions we want people to ask are

- What are the benefits of my treatment?
- What are the risks of my treatment?
- Are there other treatments I can try?
- What if I do nothing?

You may already be using similar questions in your own setting.

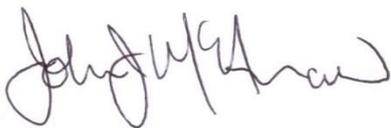
The resources include

- help for patients to prepare in advance of their appointment, for example digital and social media adverts
- items to remind people when they arrive, such as posters and leaflets for waiting rooms

Find out more

A sample leaflet is attached. If you want to make use of the resources, which include a number of translations and some images for social media, they are available on the NHS Inform website at <https://www.nhsinform.scot/itsoktoask>

Thank you very much for your support,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John McAnaw', written in a cursive style.

Dr John McAnaw, Head of Pharmacy
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