

PRESS RELEASE

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PATIENTS' GROUP CALL FOR EXTENDED GP OPENING TIMES TO REDUCE A&E WAITING

A Manchester based patients' champion group is calling on GPs to extend their opening hours to tackle the current overcrowding at A&E departments. The Patients' Council believes that unless there is a shift in the way GP services are delivered, the problems surrounding both the volume of people attending A&E and the delays in their treatment will just get worse.

The Patients' Council is an independent group with a national membership of 12,000 and is made up of patients with long term medical conditions. It works closely with NHS trusts across the country and other relevant organisations advising on a range of patient related issues.

Paul Mainwaring, chair of the Patients' Council, says: "A&E departments should be focused on treating very ill patients and yet our own research shows that the number of people attending A&E with minor injuries that are treatable by a GP is rising. When asked why they are at A&E, patients say it is because they feel they have no other option as they are unable to get a GP appointment that fits in with their work and family responsibilities."

The Patients' Council believe GP surgeries need to change the way they currently operate and become much more patient focused.

They are calling for three main changes to the current GP offering:

- GP surgeries to open 7am to 8pm, seven days a week
- Early and late appointments reserved for those working
- GP appointments to be available within 24 hours

And the Patients' Council argues that not only is this offering what patients want and need, but it would also save the NHS millions of pounds.

Paul adds: "To treat a patient with minor injuries at A&E costs the NHS £50, but for a GP to treat that same person is just half the cost at £25. The responsibility now lies with our Primary Care Trusts as the commissioners of GP services, to ensure there is adequate access to these services whatever the hour. It is vital that patients feel they have other options other than presenting at an already overburdened A&E department."

ENDS

For further information, please contact The Patients' Council on 0161 766 9323



Notes to editor:

The Patients' Council was established in 2005 and is made up of a membership of more than 12,000 people from all walks of life, age and race.

It is an independent organisation that endeavours to make sure the concerns, views and thoughts of patients influence both current and future health services.

The Patients' Council aims to develop a patient-led NHS and advises local NHS trusts and other relevant organisations on a range of health issues.