

Prescription Charges unchanged for people with long-term medical conditions Crohn's and Colitis

27th May 2010. St Alban's Herts, UK. The National Association for Colitis and Crohn's disease (NACC) has today welcomed the publication of Professor Ian Gilmore's review on prescription charge exemption for people with long term conditions, and calls on the new coalition government to act on his considered and clearly presented proposals to abolish prescription charges for people in England who are living with living with long term conditions.

Helen Terry, the NACC Director of Patient Information and Support explains, "It is extremely disappointing for people with Crohn's or Colitis that Professor Gilmore's recommendations will not be taken up immediately as we had hoped. We hope that the system of prescription charges and exemptions will now be looked at as part of the next Government Spending Review in the autumn and we sincerely hope that this will result in a favourable outcome for people with the life-long bowel conditions - Crohn's and Colitis.

NACC has been campaigning for free medicines for the 31,000 NACC members for many years and considers that the current list of conditions qualifying for prescription charge exemption is antiquated, well overdue for review and very unfair.

For example, the majority of 31,000 NACC members have chronic bowel conditions that require them to take a number of medicines, two to three times a day. The charity knows that even with the benefit of a prescription pre-payment card, some members are struggling financially and as a result may be not taking their medicines regularly enough to control these serious bowel conditions. This means that they may ultimately require more intensive and costly treatment for a flare-up of their disease which will be more expensive for the NHS in the long run.

Helen Terry continues, “The situation for our members who have had surgery resulting in a permanent stoma is very different, as they are thankfully eligible for prescription exemption. This just demonstrates the inequality of the current situation and makes NACC even more determined to ensure that all our membership can benefit from free medicines.

Currently, our NACC members in Wales are benefiting from free medicines and charges in Scotland are being phased out. This means that any financial barriers to our Welsh and Scottish members’ treatment will be removed and we welcome this development. We hope that we will achieve a similarly favourable outcome for English patients with Crohn’s and Colitis in the autumn.”

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