

Spot light on Continence Care

Submitted by: AHPMA

Monday, 19 January 2009

Embargoed till 3pm 20th Jan 09

Video and new All Party Parliamentary Group launched to tackle incontinence issues

Continence care is not often in the spot light, yet around six million men, women and children in the UK are affected by incontinence. This week a video is being launched to highlight issues relating to incontinence and an All Party Parliamentary Group chaired by Baroness Sally Greengross, is to hold its first meeting in the House of Lords. The Group backed by MPs, Peers and health professionals, aims to encourage better continence care services for all age groups, and to remove the taboo associated with incontinence.

Incontinence has many forms, from an occasional light leakage of urine, bedwetting, or to complete loss of bladder or bowel control. Most people will be affected at some time in their lives, be it during childhood, adolescence, middle age or later in life. The impact is often dramatic and even devastating. This common problem causes unnecessary embarrassment and as a result, a high proportion of children and adults will hide the problem for many years. Many continence conditions are treatable, for example around 70% of bladder control problems can be cured, and most other situations can be dramatically improved by treatment or management. It is estimated that at any given time around 4 – 6 million people experience continence problems in the UK.

Despite its prevalence, NHS resources for continence care are limited and staff struggle to provide quality continence care services and products against ever increasing budgetary constraints. Cost cuts have affected procurement for products which manage incontinence which in turn may carry hidden costs in areas such as skin health, loss of independence and increased product waste.

A 2008 survey conducted by The Absorbent Hygiene Product Manufacturers Association (<http://www.ahpma.co.uk>) (AHPMA), painted a bleak picture of continence services in the UK, with wide variation across the country. It showed increased workloads and waiting lists for assessment and treatment, and restricted product provision which means many people have to self fund or top up their allowance.

The Government promised to deliver integrated incontinence services by April 2004 but a Royal College of Physicians report of December 2006 noted that integrated services “are a dream rather than a reality”.

Dealing with incontinence costs the NHS £425 million per year and, with an ageing population, it's a growing problem. As the House of Commons has already heard from Graham Allen MP in a debate on 24 October 2007, “the biggest cost is the failure to deal promptly and humanely with incontinence problems”

Baroness Greengross commented: ‘Inadequate financial provision for services and products can affect dignity and quality of life and compromises the ability of affected individuals to attend education, hold down jobs, participate in normal social or sporting activities or even leave the house. Without help a

person can quickly become isolated by this condition, families or carers are put under extreme pressure to cope and as a result, incontinence is often a key reason for deciding against caring for a loved one at home. It is important that the Government ensures continence care is given adequate provision and greater priority.'

To view the four minute video visit www.ahpma.co.uk/continence.html to learn about AHPMA visit www.ahpma.co.uk

End

Issued by: Tracy Stewart, AHPMA Web: www.ahpma.co.uk

Contact: email: stewart.t@ahpma.co.uk Office Phone: 01483 418221 Mob: 07811 280544

AHPMA represents the UK's absorbent continence care, feminine hygiene and disposable nappy industries. Its members include: Abena UK Ltd, Attends Healthcare Group Ltd, Johnson & Johnson GmbH, Kimberly-Clark Ltd, Lil-lets (UK) Ltd, Millie & More Pty Ltd, Multibrands International Ltd, Ontex Retail Ltd, Paul Hartmann Ltd, Procter and Gamble UK, SCA Hygiene Products Ltd, Toiletry Sales Ltd.

Editors Notes:

Video can be viewed at www.ahpma.co.uk/continence.html

The All Party Parliamentary Group for Continence Care is to be chaired by Baroness Sally Greengross and has so far recruited 26 MPs and Peers as members. It also has the support of a large number of health experts and key interest groups and charities.

Aim of project:

- Lift taboo by raising awareness and understanding of continence issues
- Encourage people to seek help
- Raise the profile of the importance of continence services for children and adults
- Provide an equitable service for all age groups and to make good practice guidelines mandatory
- Better funding for cost effective continence services and product provision
- End the post code lottery of continence services and products
- Establish better data to understand the extent of the problem
- Encourage sustainable procurement

Key Facts

- Incontinence is ageless and sexless - most people will be affected at some point in their lives - from childhood through to older years
- 4-6 million people in the UK suffer from some form of incontinence at any given time

- 1 in 12 children and young people in the UK experience wetting and soiling difficulties
- An estimated 3.7 million women in the UK suffer from stress incontinence – high percentage can be cured or improved if help is sought
- Incontinence is more prevalent than asthma, epilepsy and dementia
- Average increase of incontinent clients per NHS Trust is 8% per annum
- Dealing with incontinence costs the NHS £425 million per year (Hansard 24 October 2007)

Westminster Hall Debate on Incontinence

In response to a debate on incontinence, prompted by Graham Allen MP on 24 October 2007, then Health Minister, Ivan Lewis said "... the system is simply not working in the way that it should be in too many parts of the country. Too many patients and, indeed, family members describe a system that is neither sensitive nor effective...". Ivan Lewis told Graham Allen: "he has my cast-iron guarantee that the Government will take the issue seriously and work with him and professionals to improve services for people who experience this incredibly difficult condition"

January 2009