

Doctors' Corner

What is there in your cupboard?

Huge amounts of money - yours and my taxpayer's money - are spent each year in the Health Service on drugs and medicines to improve health, to keep people with long term conditions well, and to treat symptoms.

No-one worries that this is a good use of money, except where these medicines are carelessly used, or worse, wasted.

In a recent visit to a household in Torbay **£5000** worth of drugs were in the cupboard. The National Service Framework for Older People estimate between 4-8% of medicines are wasted - which would be about **£1-2 million in Torbay**. Even worse, it costs money to destroy returned drugs, and in 2006/7 we spent **£15,000** destroying over 1000 bins of returned drugs in Torbay.

When is a drug wasted? - some examples -

- When a course of medicine is not completed
- When a repeat prescription is ordered too early
- Generally you only need one medicine for a symptom - Where 2, or even 3 medicines are being given for the same symptom, one can often be stopped.

- When you forget to take the tablets prescribed.

What can be done?

- Check your cupboard - is there "more than a month's" prescription medicine in there?
- If you find the prescription advice difficult to follow and you find you are missing doses - talk to your pharmacist or the doctor
- Are there any medicines on your repeat list which are no longer needed - or needed infrequently? We would like to tidy them up, so let us know by crossing them off on your next request.
- Make sure you know what each medicine is given for - you may find there are some you don't need

If you need advice you can contact-

- Karen, and her prescribing team
- Catherine Henley, our practice Pharmacist
- Your local Pharmacist
- Or, of course your doctor or nurse, in surgery, by letter, by phone or by e-mail.