

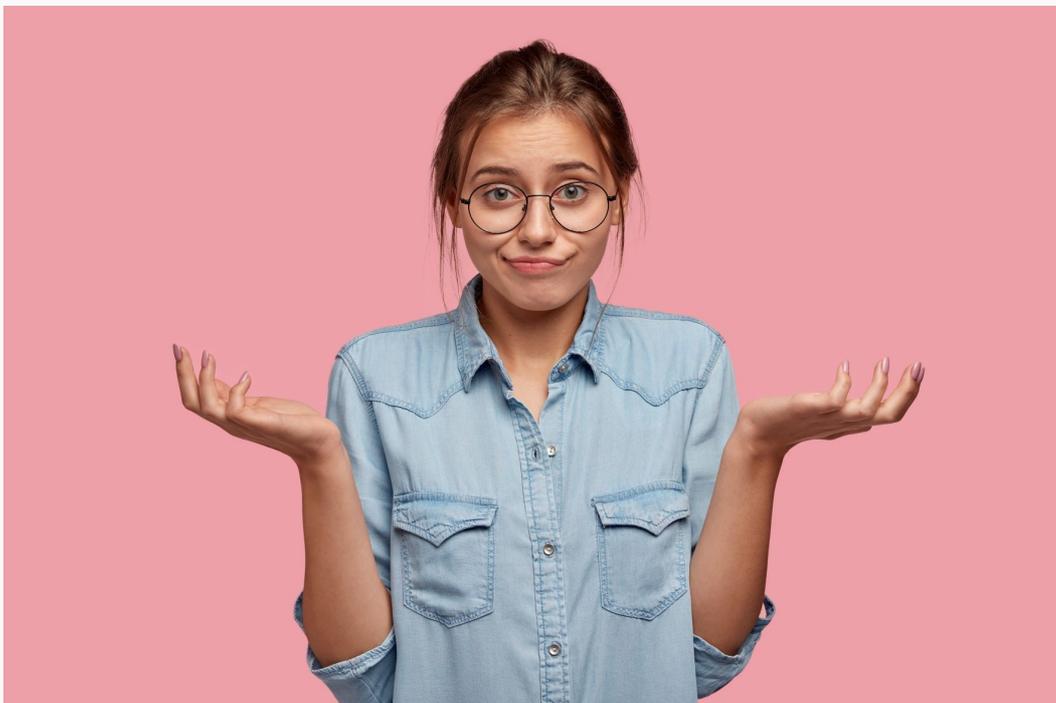
**Welcome to the Patients Association's
Weekly News**

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 Forward

**We want your views on patients' rights to choose
where they have treatment**



With NHS waiting lists at record levels, it's more important than ever that patients are able to exercise their right to choose where they receive their NHS treatment or diagnosis, including at an independent healthcare provider, so they can access the fastest possible care.

If you have recently had routine NHS treatment, or are currently waiting, or likely to need treatment in the next year, we would like to hear your views on patient choice as part of a project to highlight the importance of patient choice and the role it can play in tackling the NHS backlog in England.

We're interested in this topic because despite the [Government's commitment](#) to giving patients greater choice and control, awareness of the right to choose remains relatively low. Fewer than half of patients are aware of their right to choose where they receive their NHS care.

In particular, we want to understand patients' views on choice, and what further support might be needed for patients to make the right choices for themselves. We are working with the [Independent Healthcare Providers Network](#) (IHPN) on this project.

We are holding an online focus group on the afternoon of Thursday 21st April. If you would like to take part, please let us know by filling in a [short form online](#). Participants will receive an £80 voucher once the focus group is completed.

For more information about this project please contact the project manager Hannah Verghese hannah.verghese@patients-association.org.uk

[Register your interest](#)

Write to your MP to campaign against the loss of free prescriptions



[Pharmacist photo created by gpointstudio - www.freepik.com](#)

Last year the UK Government consulted on aligning prescription charges with the state pension age - as members of the Prescription Charges Coalition we oppose this proposal and support the campaign to urgently reform the prescription exemption criteria in England.

You can join this campaign by writing to [your MP](#) and asking them to sign Early Day Motion 406 to oppose this proposal.

The Coalition encourages people to lobby their MPs in person or by phone, as this can have a huge impact on the MP. It has a Guide to Lobbying your MP on prescription charges, which will tell you everything you need to know to make it happen. Download the guide below.

[Download the prescription charges lobby guide](#)

Have your say on a national standard for shared decision making



Patients are invited to comment on a draft of a national standard on shared decision making, which the Professional Record Standards Body (PRSB) has developed.

The draft standard aligns with [GMC guidance](#) on shared decision making and consent, as well as the [NICE guidelines](#) on shared decision making. It has been canvassing the opinion of healthcare professionals but would very much like to hear from patients and members of the public.

The [survey](#) will take about 15 minutes to complete, and there's a video that explains shared decision making and how the draft will improve the wider use of shared decision making, which is something we support.

The PRSB drives the development and adoption of standards for care records. Standards ensure the right information is recorded correctly, in the right place and can be accessed easily by any authorised person who needs it, wherever they are.

[Take the survey](#)

New on our website - our accessibility journey



Rather than traditional minutes, Sarah draws PVM's discussions after every meeting.

Head of Patient Partnership, Sarah Tilsed, focusses on what we have put in place to ensure that our work is more accessible, in her latest blog on our website.

Sarah acknowledges we still have a long way to go, but working with Patient Voices Matter, our lived experience advisory panel, is helping us on our journey to improved accessibility for members and patients.

[Read the blog](#)

What we're going to be reading and sharing in future

Important information/topics should never be withheld just because there is some inequality of access. There will always be differences of access related to age, language, intellect, disability etc

If everyone can't access the full article, no-one should be able to access it? This sounds worryingly like the politics of envy and quite alien, I would have thought, to the Patients' Association's values

You should NOT provide links to articles behind paywalls. It is discriminatory, helps to consolidate the paywall strategy AND SENDS THE WRONG MESSAGE.

If you only include free articles it could be a form of bias, if you include articles, journals and papers behind the paywalls, it will frustrate those that can't reach them. At least these things are clearly labelled, we won't waste time trying to access a paywalled article.

I would be less frustrated if you did not include these stories at all.

I do find it very frustrating and disappointing- one simply couldn't afford to keep paying the wide range of organisations that charge now. You just end up feeling like you are missing out!

Selection of comments from readers for and against the inclusion of links to articles behind paywalls.

Readers fall into two groups on the matter of sharing stories behind paywalls in the section, What our team is reading this week, in Weekly News.

Most people who got in touch thought we should share stories, even if they were behind a paywall. But if we did, we should make it clear the article is behind a paywall.

But another group, albeit smaller, was very much against us including any links that didn't lead to immediately accessible newspapers and journals. Their concern was that doing so was discriminatory and against our values.

We are very grateful for all the people who emailed us about this issue and based on the feedback we're going to do the following:

- We will include links to articles behind paywalls; we will clearly indicate what is behind a paywall and who the publisher is to enable people with a subscription to that publication to read it.
- We will include no more than one paywalled article in any week.
- We will share with readers a list of newspapers and magazines that offer free trials or a limited number of free articles a month.

We will review this position in another six months to see how it's going. Readers can, at any time, share their comments by writing to weeklynews@patients-association.org.uk

From the helpline

Worried about possible medication change



Rebecca*, who lives in the east of England, called our helpline worried that her GP was going to change her medication.

Rebecca's is neuroatypical and lives with anxiety; the possibility that her GP may change or stop medication was making her very anxious. The medications, which she's been on for several years, help her manage pain from a previous surgery and help her sleep.

Our adviser told Rebecca that as she has annual medication reviews she should wait until her GP raises the possibility of change and then make it clear to the GP how helpful her medicines are to her. He also told her that normally, a GP would discuss any plans to change or stop medication with the patient. But our adviser did tell Rebecca that if her GP changed her medication against her wishes, she should ask her GP to refer her for a second opinion.

He also suggested Rebecca get in touch with the National Autistic Society for advice about preparing for a GP appointment and provided her with the contact details.

*Name changed to protect privacy.

To contact our helpline team, call 0800 3457115 between 9.30am and 5pm on

weekdays or email helpline@patients-association.org.uk. See [our website](#) for more ways to get in touch.

And remember, we have a [range of information](#) on our website from our very popular nutrition checklist right through to understanding your medicines.

What our team is reading this week

Over 60s could lose free NHS prescriptions but some people are exempt - are you?

Fourth Covid jabs could be rolled out from NEXT WEEK after health chiefs were accused of being too slow amid rise in cases and admissions

Covid in Scotland: NHS enduring 'worst week' since start of pandemic as cases surge

Building public understanding of health and health inequalities

The cap on care costs: what does the government proposal mean?

About Us

Our purpose is to ensure that everybody can access and benefit from the health and care they need to live well, by ensuring that services are designed and delivered through equal partnership with patients.

Our strategic focus for 2021-25 is patient partnership in the design and delivery of health and care services.

We are a registered charity raising all our own funds. If you'd like to support our work for all patients and make a difference, please [donate or consider making a regular donation](#). Thank you.



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