**26-Sep-22    Recycling - Inhaler Disposal**

*Sent on behalf of Vasu Siva, GP Partner & Clinical Lead for Green Agenda*

Dear Colleagues,  
  
This week, our focus is on safe inhaler disposal.  
   
Inhalers need to be safely disposed of to prevent propellant gases escaping into the atmosphere. MDIs contain propellants that are greenhouse gases, thousands of times more powerful than carbon dioxide - contributing to nearly 4% of the entire NHS carbon footprint and about 25% of the general practice prescribing carbon footprint. The plastic and aluminium parts should be recycled, and the harmful greenhouse gases thermally degraded into less environmentally damaging products.  
   
**If all used inhalers in the UK were returned for safe disposal, this could save 512 330 tonnes of CO2eq annually — the same as a VW Golf car being driven around the world 88 606 times!**  
   
**GP trainees and anyone who is interested in doing QI projects/audits, please read on!**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **ACTIVITY: Safe Inhaler Disposal** | |
| **What is the activity?** | * Encourage patients to return their used or unwanted inhalers to their community pharmacy for safe disposal (recycling/incineration) |
| **What are the benefits of the activity?**  **(GP surgery, staff, patients, community, environment)** | * Patients given a sense of ‘ownership’ in protecting their environment * Staff feels empowered * Improves public awareness of the consequences of incorrect inhaler disposal * Protects environment |
| **How to carry out the activity?** | * Organise a clinical meeting with your team * Discuss the differences between inhalers (e.g., pMDIs, DPIs, SMIs); safe inhaler disposal; importance of mitigating climate change etc. * Promote & share information with patients on [returning inhalers to the pharmacy](https://s40639.pcdn.co/wp-content/uploads/Returning-inhalers-poster-greener-practice-toolkit-v1.1.pdf) at every opportunity (e.g., via Mjog, AccuRx), laminated posters in the waiting room, social media, surgery website etc. * Update System One template to include ‘offer advice on safe inhaler disposal’ * For audit ideas please see Resources section. Involve medical students, GP/nurse/CP trainees |
| **How would this be measured?** | * Ask local pharmacies to update on how many inhalers are being returned to them * Invite GP trainees (and/or anyone who is interested) to do a QI audit (e.g., understand patients’ knowledge of inhaler recycling - See Resources section) |
| **What are the benefits/award once you have completed the activity?** | * Your surgery would have   completed **one of the ‘Bucket list items’** mentioned in the ES 25 Green Initiative & contributed towards NHSE ambition |
| **How will this be reported?** | * Annual submission of the evidence of participation of the Bucket list items mentioned in the Delivery section of ES 25 Green Initiative |

**Helpful Resources/Audit ideas:**

[Disposal Projects/Audits](https://www.greenerpractice.co.uk/high-quality-and-low-carbon-asthma-care/projects/disposal/)

<https://bjgplife.com/understanding-patients-knowledge-of-inhaler-recycling/>

[Reducing our practice’s carbon footprint by appropriate inhaler prescribing](https://www.greenerpractice.co.uk/news-item/reducing-our-practices-carbon-footprint-by-appropriate-inhaler-prescribing/)