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# GOING GREENER!

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A healthier planet supports healthy people...



Welcome to the eighth of twelve newsletters, highlighting research that addresses the top challenges currently facing general practice...

## What does greener healthcare mean for you?

For some years now I have been talking about how healthcare that is kinder to the planet is also better for people. However, I generally find that most healthcare professionals place greener healthcare into the 'important but not my job' box. I think this is largely because people transpose the actions they take to reduce their personal carbon footprint (building, travel, food, waste) onto the workplace. However, the majority of the carbon footprint in primary care is in prescribing and so directly related to our clinical care. [Greener clinical healthcare](#) is about reducing the need for healthcare in the first place and improving the efficiency of healthcare.

This work can be seen as population health management at primary care network level and can also be enacted in individual consultations. How can our patients access nature-based interventions, social prescribing, physical activity etc. How can we improve long term condition care in a way that targets those who need it most? How can we reduce overprescribing and medicines wastage? How can we embed continuity of care into our health systems? As well as improving people's health, all these actions will reduce our workload. [Greener healthcare aligns](#) with all the things we would want do for the health of our patients and communities, even if there was no climate crisis. But there is a climate crisis and we need to act now. Last year the NHS became the first health organisation to commit to [net-zero healthcare](#). The new integrated care systems are currently writing their green plans. These plans could be a huge opportunity for us and our patients in primary care. Learn more at [Greener Practice](#).

**Editorial by Dr Aarti Bansal, GP, Founder of Greener Practice, Net-zero Clinical Lead for Humber Coast and Vale ICS, Honorary Senior Lecturer, HYMS.**

## The NHS is responsible for almost 5% of the UK's carbon footprint.

Many will be familiar with the shocking example of a single Ventolin inhaler, which has a carbon footprint of 28kg, equivalent to a small car travelling 175 miles (London to Sheffield). Replicate this thousands of times and it's easy to understand why change is needed. **Recently, Greener NHS announced a target of net zero carbon emissions by 2040.**

On top of all the other work GPs have to do at the moment, working towards a greener practice has never been more important. The recent climate conference in Glasgow highlighted that time is running out for our planet.

## So how can you help?

It may feel like another task you can't take on, but many positive steps can be incredibly simple, could save your practice money and could potentially be led by your GP registrar as a quality improvement project.

### For a start, you could think about waste.

Do you recycle waste paper and plastics?

Do you print double-sided, or should you even be printing that leaflet; could the link be sent by text or email?

Is that blood test, scan or prescription needed?



Is de-prescribing an option, or could I prescribe a **dry-powder, rather than a metered-dose inhaler?**



**Considering the energy supply to my practice...**

Is there a **renewable energy supplier** who I could switch to?

Are my light bulbs energy efficient?

**Does our social prescriber promote green activities?**

Spending time outdoors can be beneficial to our health and wellbeing and may result in a reduced carbon footprint. Your social prescriber could be well placed to advise patients on opportunities available.

**Is your social prescriber supporting people living in fuel poverty?**

Your social prescriber could help to direct people living in fuel poverty to access support to be more energy efficient and insulate their homes.



**Could you be a positive role model for change?**

Would walking or cycling to work, or even home visits, be an option? Or have you considered changing your car to a hybrid or electric vehicle?



Could your practice take part in a local park run to promote green activities?

Could you advertise your practice's participation in green initiatives, to send a public health message to your patients about the importance and urgency of action on environmental sustainability?

Small changes could have a significant impact both on the health of our patients and the future of our planet.

Every action we take has an often unseen impact.  
The RCGP Green Impact for Health Toolkit has been developed to support practices to take positive steps to reduce their carbon footprint.

*So far, over 1,000 practices have already signed up- have you?*

Please join us, by trying to act on at least one suggestion from this newsletter to help protect our future...

### Useful links for further information

- <https://www.greenimpact.org.uk/giforhealth/register>
- <https://www.greenerpractice.co.uk/>
- <https://www.gponline.com/10-tips-greener-general-practice/article/1671158>

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## HIGHLIGHTS FROM WISEGP

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### WISE GP Podcast

Hosted by WISE Intern Johanna Reilly, the WiseGP podcast focuses on a wide range of topics, from the RCGP junior international committee and WONCA to narrative medicine and the elephant in the room.

The podcast is available to download on our website and from several major podcast hosts. Please have a listen and let us know if you would like to be a guest or have any guest suggestions! <https://www.wisegp.co.uk/wisereads>



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In our next newsletter we will be excited to introduce to you the WISDOM project...

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