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PAGB Survey Shows Brits Losing Confidence In Self-Care, Time For UK Government To Act

by [David Ridley](#)

UK consumers “may be falling back into pre-pandemic behaviours and there is a time-limited opportunity to embed the changes people had embraced during the pandemic,” argues PAGB CEO Michelle Riddalls as the association publishes its latest self-care survey.

British consumers want to self-care but are becoming less confident in their own ability to do so effectively, reveals a new report from UK consumer healthcare industry association the PAGB.

According to the PAGB’s latest yearly self-care survey – published to coincide with UK Self-care Week (14-20 November) – two thirds (64%) of respondents who would have not considered self-care as their first option before the pandemic said they were more likely to do so in the future.

Although this shows that a strong majority of UK consumers want to self-care, this figure is lower than in 2021, when 69% of people indicated that they would have considered self-care as their first option.

While the reduction in the figure is small, the findings suggest that people “may be falling back into pre-pandemic behaviors and that there is a time-limited opportunity to embed the changes people had embraced during the pandemic,” commented PAGB CEO Michelle Riddalls.

Uneven Picture

As might be expected, UK consumers are also more confident in treating some conditions than others.

For example, almost all respondents felt confident in self-treating colds, with most also feeling confident in treating coughs, headaches, cuts or bruises, sore throat and blocked nose.

However, with regards to other common conditions like athlete's foot, just under half felt confident.

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There is room for improvement," noted the PAGB. "More research needs to be done to understand why this is the case so that we might overcome any challenges."

Unsurprisingly, this confidence is reflected in UK self-care market data, with pain relief and cough, cold and flu OTC medicines consistently in the top three categories by sales value. (Also see "[UK OTC Market Bounces Back In 2021 With Help Of Cold, Flu And Pain Categories](#)" - HBW Insight, 22 Jun, 2022.)

UK Switches

PAGB's survey shows that 81% of respondents said they feel confident using OTC medicines and 74% believe more medicines should be available OTC.

The PAGB acknowledged the work that the UK medicines regulator, the MHRA, had done in recent months to widen access to healthcare via Rx-to-OTC switch.

"The reclassification and availability of two types of contraceptive pill – HRA Pharma's Hana and Maxwellia's Lovima, both 75mcg desogestrel) – from a prescription-only medicine to one that can be sold under the supervision of a pharmacist was a key moment in women's health," PAGB commented. (Also see "[HRA Pharma And Maxwellia To Launch The UK's First OTC Daily Contraceptives](#)" - HBW Insight, 9 Jul, 2021.)

"More recently, postmenopausal women can now access Gina (Novo Nordisk, 10mcg estradiol hemihydrate), a vaginal hormone treatment, directly from pharmacies," the association continued. (Also see "[Rx-to-OTC Switch Of Menopause Treatment Approved In UK](#)" - HBW Insight, 21 Jul, 2022.)

"This is the first time that any form of hormone replacement therapy has been made available for over-the-counter sale in the UK since it was first available in 1965," it added.

Work To Be Done

While these are "landmark reclassifications" and show that the UK is "moving in the right

direction,” PAGB said that “more can be done.”

“Given the challenging winter ahead, the poor economic forecast and the government’s aspirations for the National Health Service, it is critical for the government to act now in order to ensure the progress made in self-care is not lost.”

Riddalls reiterated the association’s call for the UK government to develop a national self-care strategy and said that the organisation would also “play our part and undertake further research to understand the barriers which prevent people from practicing self-care and how the system can support people to feel confident in treating some self-treatable conditions.” (Also see "[UK Industry Urges Government to Develop Self-Care Strategy](#)" - HBW Insight, 22 Oct, 2021.)

Global Issue?

PAGB’s findings in the UK echo those reported by the Global Self-Care Federation in its Self-Care Readiness Index.

Examining stakeholder support and adoption as one of four enablers for self-care in 20 markets overall, the GSCF found that, globally, “there is a widespread lack of a coherent view of self-care and its benefit.” (Also see "[GSCF Self-Care Index Update Reveals 'Widespread Lack Of Understanding'](#)" - HBW Insight, 19 Oct, 2022.)

In its analysis in the first edition of the SCRI, GSCF found that, from the perspective of self-care product companies, the UK’s NHS is “very good at encouraging self-management of chronic and long-term conditions.”

Where the NHS falls short, however, is in supporting self-care in the case of minor ailments, the GSCF pointed out.