Dear Doctor

We are delighted to inform you of the trial of a new service, Point of Care CRP testing, which is being offered at …….Pharmacy.

You will be aware that CRP is a protein normally present in very low concentrations in the blood of healthy people. In bacterial infections, CRP concentrations markedly increase, whereas viral infections usually only induce very modest CRP elevation or none at all. To assay levels of the protein we will be using FineCare CRP-an easy-to-use test for quantitative measurement of CRP. The system-consisting of a small portable instrument and a ready to use kit-is especially designed for use in the primary care setting. The test is designed to be performed on a finger prick blood sample and the test result is available in a couple of minutes during patient consultation. FineCare CRP is a valuable tool helping to distinguish between bacterial and viral infections and to target antibiotic treatment patients most likely to benefit from it. The analyser provides a reproducible result as accurate as that obtained using clinical chemistry analysers.

Uncomplicated viral infection usually has little effect on CRP concentration. A clearly elevated CRP result indicates bacterial infection warranting antibiotic treatment. Conversely, FineCare CRP can also provide reassurance to both the healthcare practitioner and the patient in cases where prescription of antibiotics does not appear justified. By confirming a likely viral infection, FineCare CRP can help to reduce unjustified use of antibiotics particularly in connection with respiratory tract infections.

Current NICE guidance is that “for people presenting with symptoms of lower respiratory tract infection in primary care, consider a point of care C-reactive protein test if after clinical assessment a diagnosis of pneumonia has not been made and it is not clear whether antibiotics should be prescribed. Use the results of the C-reactive protein test to guide antibiotic prescribing in people without a clinical diagnosis of pneumonia as follows:

- Do not routinely offer antibiotic therapy if the C-reactive protein concentration is less than 20 mg/litre.
- Consider a delayed antibiotic prescription (a prescription for use at a later date if symptoms worsen) if the C-reactive protein concentration is between 20 mg/litre and 100 mg/litre.
- Offer antibiotic therapy if the C-reactive protein concentration is greater than 100 mg/ Litre”.

Our pharmacy staff have been trained to explain the test to patients and should their scores fall into the latter above two categories, we will provide the patient with the results of the test

to discuss with yourself. We sincerely hope that this service will not only reduce the use of unnecessary antibiotics but also free up more of your time to see more urgent cases. Those patients with a CRP of less than 20mg/litre will be offered appropriate over-the-counter medications by the pharmacy staff. The cost of the service is free to yourself and the patient, and this pilot study service evaluation is being fully funded, with the hope that a larger scale study might take place next year throughout the full duration of the flu season.

This is the first time this service is being evaluated in community pharmacy in UK and I sincerely hope that you will agree to participate by asking your staff to refer appropriate patients to the pharmacy for testing.

Please do not hesitate to contact me for any further information. We will of course keep you updated with the progress of the trial, should you so wish.

Yours sincerely