

Soaring number of dementia prescriptions illustrates 'crisis'

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Thousands more dementia drugs were given to patients last year as Scotland's NHS faces the consequences of an ageing population.

More than 263,000 drugs were prescribed last year, an increase of 5.4 per cent from 2015/16.

Compared with two years ago, doctors now give out 70 more dementia drugs a day as growing numbers are diagnosed with the illness.

And in the space of seven years, the total number of patients receiving drugs for dementia has almost doubled from 135,840 in 2010/11 to 263,444 last year.

The figures were published by ISD Scotland.

It's the latest set of statistics illustrating the challenges faced by the NHS in relation to an ageing population.

It's estimated there will be nearly 20,000 newly diagnosed cases of dementia a year by 2020, while health experts have said hospitals are being overwhelmed with patients who are being treated for physical ailments, but also suffer from conditions like Alzheimer's.

Despite the increase in prescriptions, the cost burden on the NHS has reduced.

Last year, the average cost per item decreased to £14.38, compared to £21.57 two years ago.

Scottish Conservative public health spokeswoman Annie Wells said:

"It's of course welcome that so many people are living longer.

"But it would be foolish to ignore the challenges that brings for the NHS, and we can see from these figures more and more people are being treated for dementia.

"The Scottish Government will have seen this coming down the track for many years now, so there's no excuse for it not to be ready.

"This rise will also pose huge challenges for hospitals who treat these patients when they succumb to other ailments.

"Having been in charge of health and social care for more than a decade, we need to start seeing signs that the SNP has a plan for this impending crisis."