



Summer Newsletter



Why can't I get an appointment with my doctor? by Dr Angie Gurner

In response to the banner displayed at the Vale Surgery stating "we are accepting new patients" a few patients have expressed their frustration to doctors and nurses during appointments that they cannot see who they want, when they want. I feel it is important to help everyone understand why we are planning to steadily increase our list size and why we feel all patients will benefit. Demand across the health service has exploded over the past 20 years and while we still value continuity of care especially for patients with complex needs, as individual doctors we simply cannot be available on demand! We also have a considerable problem with patients failing to attend their Appointments, the average missed appointments each month is 206.

Funding of Primary Care is exceedingly complex and we need to claim numerous payments for services we deliver that fall outside the core contract. However more than half the income arrives as a global sum based on the number of patients on the list. Despite the recent media frenzy about more doctors and nurses for the health service over the past few months, in recent years funding has actually fallen and Primary Care now only receives 9% of the total NHS funding. This means that the main way to increase staffing is to increase the list size. Our list size has increased by 400 patients per year for the past 2 years and we appointed Dr Sarah Burns to a permanent position last year. Similarly we are now recruiting an extra nurse to join our team and have appointed Dr Kath O'Hara to a part time permanent position when she finishes her training in August.

We believe that a slightly larger practice, with the associated staff, will be more likely to survive the undoubted challenges to come but we do not intend to expand our list size to more than 10,000. Currently we have 8,400 patients and we are proud of the current team and the range of services and in house expertise we offer. Maintaining our skills in all these areas also means taking time out of the practice to attend updates and ensure we continue to deliver the highest standards. My interest in teaching, Dermatology and Appraising sustains my enthusiasm for Medicine at a time when many doctors are retiring early or suffering from "burnout". So please use our expert team to the full – we are doing our best with limited resources!



Practice Manager's Message Jess Yaxley



I've now been in post 3 months and I can't believe how quickly the time has flown! I am really enjoying the variety of the role and the kindness and consideration from all the Practice team is so much appreciated, I could easily have felt over-whelmed without their support. When I first started as a Practice Manager, fellow colleagues told me how no one day would be the same and that has certainly borne true. There is still so much for me to learn and going forward I am very much looking forward to the challenge, which includes building strong working relationships with our excellent PPG members, so that we can develop more ways to enhance our Service to Patients. If you would like to

join our PPG please contact Carole Pearson, PPG Chair on cuckfieldpatients@gmail.com. I am delighted to announce that due to the continued and sustained growth of the Practice, we have appointed a new, full time, Practice Nurse who will be joining us in early August. We are very much looking forward to Chloe joining the team and are confident she will quickly become a valued team member. I am also really pleased to let you know that our Registrar GP, Dr Kath O'Hara, has successfully completed her GP training and she will be joining us permanently 2 days a week from August. Dr O'Hara has already formed excellent relationships with the Practice team and our Patients and we were delighted to be able to offer Dr O'Hara a permanent position.



Would you like advice on Care and Support Services? Ask Emily!

Do you want to know what local services are out there to help you? Do you want help but you are unsure if you are entitled to it? Then ask our Care Co-ordinator, Emily

Emily is available at both surgeries to provide you with information on local services that might be of benefit to your health and wellbeing.

To contact Emily, please call: 01444 447348 (Mon & Wed) or email: Emily.payne1@nhs.net

Future Challenges – Reflections by Dr Kath O'Hara

I am very pleased to be joining the practice as a salaried GP having completed comprehensive medical training. I have diverse clinical experience, having entered medicine as a mature student. I feel very privileged and humbled to have had the opportunity to study medicine and consider General Practice to be a fascinating vocation. Working as a 'psychologically-minded' doctor with an overall holistic perspective is important to me.



However, I am entering General Practice at a time when General Practice service provision is under significant scrutiny and as such there will be challenges ahead. These challenges must be embraced with enthusiasm and a clear vision to ensure that services that are fit for the future can be developed. In her recent parliamentary address, the Queen highlighted the issue. GPs are now seeing 370 million patients a year - 70 million more patients than five years ago, which equates to an extra 150,000 patients in a single day. GPs are responsible for addressing the needs of approximately 90% of patients using the NHS. This is done with less than 10% of the health budget.

Healthcare staff are attracted to working with people for a multitude of reasons, but in our primary goal - to facilitate good clinical care - we are united. There is no doubt that at times the service can fail individuals or prove to be less than optimal. This is regrettable and frustrating and there is no room for complacency. However, be left in no doubt that, as a cohort, those within the medical profession work tirelessly and strive to provide an excellent standard of care to patients.

There are several key issues and thoughts I would like to share:

I wholeheartedly believe in the vision of Aneurin Bevan, the founder of the NHS who, in 1948, stated that, "the NHS is free at the point of entry, with availability to all". That said, there has never been a time when the NHS has been so vulnerable. The political agenda is focused on the 'promise' that we can keep providing, and keep offering an ever-widening scope of service – a promise which may be empty. There needs to be a sense of realism which is currently lacking in most if not all discussions about provision of services. We all have a responsibility to use the service appropriately and to consider the demands that we as individuals make of the service - are they realistic? This works both ways: as a clinician and using the service as a patient. GPs have the responsibility of being the gatekeeper to secondary care services, which they must use sparingly and only when required for a more specialist opinion. Although not a popular opinion, there perhaps needs to be a tempering of expectation.

It is not the sole responsibility of GPs to deal with all ailments. Patients need to accept that their health is fundamentally in their hands and is largely their own responsibility. Healthcare professionals are always delighted and willing to facilitate patients making positive strides to improve their own health. We are all running our lives at a fast pace, and as such we are busier than ever. I would suggest that at times this is not an entirely positive thing. There is always a price to pay, which perhaps contributes to ever-increasing rates of depression, stress and anxiety. The sense of the loss of the wider family unit for support can be acutely felt. The new 'Wellbeing' services are a positive addition to the optimisation of people's lifestyle choices; and perhaps alongside a consideration of techniques such as mindfulness, we can all move towards a healthier way of living. Most of all, we need to protect and preserve the treasure that is the NHS.

We are changing when we do your chronic disease review by Nurse Sheila Graysmark

Patients who have a chronic disease such as asthma, COPD, heart disease and diabetes, are invited to attend the surgery annually for a review. From April 2015 we have changed our recall system so that you will be called in the month of your birth. This means that during this year you may be called earlier or later than normal. The aim is to make the recall system easier for patients – when it's your birthday you know you are due for your review but if you have not received a letter from the surgery inviting you in at this time please ring and ask to speak to Diane who will book an appointment for you.