



Wealden Ridge Medical Partnership

Patient Participation Group Newsletter - Dec 2023

Firstly may we the PPG take this opportunity of wishing all patients and staff of the partnership a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

As I write this newsletter in early December the PPG realises that many of you have been wondering why the merger took place earlier this year. We asked the senior partner Dr Rajan why we merged?

Change is often something that is met with apprehension especially when the current service is perceived to be good, and therefore what is the need for any change? Indeed this change may indeed potentially lead to a short term struggle before any long terms gains are felt and so here I wish to outline some of our thinking on the merger and why it puts us in a good position in the future.

Increasing demands on general practice over the past five years – not just a heavier workload but the increasing complexity and intensity of work – have led to a feeling of crisis.

A recent paper in the King's fund highlighted some of the existential problems General Practice face, their key findings were:

- *GP workload has grown hugely both in volume and complexity.*
- *Population changes account for some of this but changes in medical technology and new ways of treating patients also play a role.*

- *Wider system changes have compounded the situation e.g. changes to community nursing, mental health and care homes have increased the pressure on General practice.*
- *Increased workload has not been met with an increased proportion of funding or staff.*
- *The number of GPs has not kept pace with the number of patients most likely to use the service due to a number of factors.*

These problems are very real and whilst there is little we can do to change some of these things, with the merger there is a lot we can do by improving the way we currently work without changing the way patients interact with our service. Using economies of scale we can create teams that remove a lot of the administrative burden GP's face with pharmacists for prescriptions and teams to process letters making it more attractive for the new recruitment of doctors and nurses and a more efficient service for patients and staff. We can build in resilience into teams, including those that handle phoning into the practice, so that we are less affected by sickness and vacancies. We are also able to provide new services that will benefit patient care such as first contact physiotherapists, social prescribers and also microsuction (planned in April 2024).

I realise there has been difficulties during the merger process, a lot of which has been outside

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our control, but these have been now resolved in the main. We do appreciate your patience and understanding and our hope is that you will begin to see a service that is significantly better than before and one that is better equipped to weather any future storm.

May I wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Dr Rajan

AI Smart Triage

Whilst the practice has significantly increased the number of appointments available across the sites there are times when demand outstrips supply especially on certain days of the week such as a Monday.

How do we ensure that we can effectively triage a perceived urgent medical problem a patient may face when there are no more appointments available that day?

Well, we are working with a Swedish company called Visiba whose smart triage service has been approved by NHS England as a validate triage tool. This means when on a given day the appointments have run out but you feel that you need to be seen **urgently** that day:

1. You'll get a text from us with a link to the service.

2. If it's your first time, you'll be asked to create an account. This only takes a minute, but will be quicker if you use your NHS Log-In details.
3. You'll then be asked questions about your symptoms, the whole process takes less than 2 minutes
4. When we receive your case, we will review it and contact you within the day to get you to the right place.

Opening hours – the practice phone lines are open from 0800 – 1800.

The doors to each practice are open as follows:

Heathfield

Monday to Friday 0800 – 1330 / 1400 – 1830

Newick Health Centre

Monday to Friday 0800 -1800

Alternate Saturday 0900 – 1200

The Firs

Monday to Friday 0800 – 1800

Alternate Saturday 0900 – 1200

Chailey Surgery

Monday to Friday

0800 – 1300

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Opening Hours for Christmas and New Year

WE ARE CLOSED

24th, 25th, 26th December and 1st January

Call 111 for advice or 999 for life threatening emergencies. For mental health support call Sussex Mental Healthline – 0800 0309 500

The service is free and is available to anyone concerned about their own mental health or that of a relative or friend. This includes carers and healthcare professionals.

Please remember to request your medication for the holiday period, in good time. This will allow for the prescription request to be raised, signed by a GP, and submitted to your nominated pharmacy in good time.

Telephone message

Following feedback from our patients and the PPG, the practice has carried out a thorough review of the telephone message and the options available to patients.

The initial message length has been reduced from 1 minute 25 seconds to 45 seconds. As ever the PPG and the practice welcome feedback to inform how we can improve the experience for patients.

Text Messaging Service

Some of you will be aware that the text reminder service is now back up and running following a

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change in the provider of this service. The practice is encouraged by use the service as a means to remind patients of their appointment as well as for health related matters ie: vaccine availability. Patients have the option to opt of out of this service if so required, please contact reception if you do not wish to receive text messages.

Staffing Update

We are sad to advise that Dr Larsson is leaving the practice to pursue other interests. The practice is in the process of securing the services of a new GP to join the team. Dr Larsson's last day is Friday 15th December.

DID NOT ATTEND (DNA)

Between 1st Sept and 30th November 1307 patients did not attend a booked appointment - this equates to 217 clinical hours wasted. There are even instances of patients not turning up for appointments they booked that day.

The surgery is aiming to reduce the number of DNA appointments and we have an active policy on managing this.

As well as being costly in financial terms, patients who fail to attend their agreed medical appointments often create excessive waiting times for other patients.

In 2016, Dr Robert Varham, the then Head of General Practice Development at NHS England,



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published his “Releasing Time for Care: 10 High Impact Actions for General Practice”[1] of which “Reducing DNA” featured as being one of the areas that was needed to improve productivity.

The effects:

- An increase in waiting times for patients resulting in the risk of worsening patients’ health
- A waste of the organisation’s time – not simply the clinicians’ time but also that of the administration team as the appointment invariably needs to be rebooked
- Cost to the wider NHS in the requirement of additional clinicians
- Potential of risk to a child who is reliant upon an adult to ensure that they attend their appointment

Please - if you no longer need your appointment or cannot make it for any reason let the surgery know as soon as possible, by calling or cancelling online. Patients are struggling to access appointments; please do not waste an appointment others could use. Thank you.

AGE-RELATED MACULAR DEGENERATION (AMD)

It is very important to have regular EYE TESTS. You can find out online if you are entitled to free NHS eye tests (usually over 60s or under 16s but under 18s if in full-time education). There are more categories at www.nhs.uk Search : opticians

and sight tests. You could also ask any local optician.

Information about AMD is available at www.nhs.uk Search under Health A-Z, letter A : Age-related macular degeneration (AMD). It is estimated, that nearly 40,000 people develop AMD in the UK, every year. The central area of the retina, called the macular, changes with age and leads to a gradual impairment of vision, particularly central vision. This impairment affects reading, watching TV and even recognising faces. A common symptom is seeing straight lines as wavy, for example window frame or door frame. An easy test at home is to cover one eye and if with the other eye any vertical or horizontal line appears wavy, you should ask for an eye test immediately. There is also a test called an Amsler Grid which consists of lines on paper.

A regular eye test can detect AMD before a person is aware of it. Treatment is available.

The Macular Society provides useful information at www.info@macularsociety.org

Their Helpline is 0300 3030 111.

Are your contact details up to date??

Please ensure that if you have recently changed your mobile number, email address, or moved house, then you update the surgery so that they can always get in touch. You also need to update any hospital you attend.

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