



Welcome to our latest bi-monthly Practice newsletter. Thank you for the positive feedback on our last issue, which was a 'special edition' with the results of our most recent patient survey. This time we explain a little more about our role as a Training Practice, offer an alternative to paying the recent increase in prescription fees and clarify the position (as best we can) with *care.data*, the NHS information project that you may have heard about and received a national flyer about through your door. Our 'focus on' series continues, with Eczema.

Changing faces

A patient recently commented that we seem to have lots of new faces in the surgery. As well as the five GP Partners, we have a number of doctors with us that are training to become GPs. Having explained to the patient how training to become a GP works, we thought it would be useful to share this with you all and so Dr Palframan, one of our GP Trainers, explains.

To become a GP it is essential to have a medical degree from a recognised college or university. Obvious you may think, but something that had to be explained to a Minister of Health a year or two ago when he suggested that perhaps it would be a good if GPs went to medical school!

After obtaining their degree, all doctors undertake a two year rotation through various health posts that could include time at the hospital, a public health department, a mental health care Trust or a doctors' surgery. We regularly have doctors who are in their second year spending up to four months with us here in Practice.

At this stage doctors usually apply to undergo specialist training in their chosen area, which could include general practice. Prospective GPs undergo a rigorous training programme lasting three years. Half of this time will be spent in a 'Training Practice' such as ours. They are closely supervised throughout, have regular teaching and tough assessments on a regular basis. They have written and practical examinations to pass and keep a detailed log of their learning. Part of their learning is through reflection of their consultations with patients and you may have been asked if you mind our GP Trainees videoing your consultation to discuss with their Trainer. All very different from when I was in the same situation nearly 30 years ago.

So what do they bring to the Practice? Enthusiasm, knowledge and skills. They ask questions that keep us on our toes. They provide additional appointments for patients which has meant that our waiting times to see a doctor are amongst the lowest in the county. We value their hard work and the care they provide our patients. If you would like further information about our GP Trainees, don't hesitate to ask any of the team.

Beat the increase in prescription fees!

Those of you who do not have current exemption from prescription charges will have noticed or heard about the increase which came into effect from 1st April. For the 12 months from April this year, the cost of each prescription item increased to £8.05, payable on collection of the item.



If you regularly have two repeat prescriptions a month, it is worth considering an NHS pre payment certificate. The certificate works like a season ticket, with a financial benefit. Effectively you are paying in advance for your medication, with no limitation on the number of items you collect during the term of the certificate.

For example, a patient who pays for two items a month would pay £8.05 per item (£16.10 per month or £193.20 per year). A pre payment certificate covering the 12 month period costs £104 and the 3 month period £29.10.

The other positive news is that while individual prescription charges have gone up, the cost of pre payment certificates have not increased and remain at £29.10 for a 3 month certificate and £104 for a 12 month subscription. The 12 month fee can be paid in monthly instalments by direct debit.

There are several ways to purchase a certificate:

- On line at www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/ppc
- Telephone 0300 330 1341
- Complete an application form (available from our dispensaries)

Easter opening times

For those of you reading this edition in early April, the surgery is only closed for an additional two days over the Easter period; Good Friday and Easter Monday. Outside of these times both our Poringland and Rockland St Mary Surgeries are open as normal. When the surgery is closed, there are a number of options to help address any urgent health care needs that may arise.



- 111 – the 24 hour NHS help line
- If necessary, the 111 service may arrange for a doctor to telephone you back or request you visit one of the local out of hours urgent care centres in Norwich.
- Your local Pharmacy can help with medication queries.
- The NHS Walk in Centre in the Castle Mall shopping centre.
- Try to avoid using A&E unless it is a true medical emergency.

Information about you



Many of you may have read or heard about the NHS information project called *care.data* and received this leaflet through your door following a national mailing campaign.

The project is about sharing certain aspects of your medical record with the NHS Health and Social Care Information Centre (HSCIC) to help understand both nationally and locally the health needs of patients to then help shape the provision of local health services.

The project has been controversial as for the first time extracts from your medical record will be taken, along with your post code and NHS number, but not your name. The extracts are then linked to any care that you may have received in other health settings, such as hospitals in England, which already send data to the HSCIC.

The extraction of data was due to start about now and patients have had the ability to 'opt out' of their data being extracted by the national data centre. To 'opt out' patients have to sign an 'opt out' form which is available at our reception desks or via our web site.

There has been some criticism about the way in which the NHS has made patients aware of the programme and so in early January the HSCIC commissioned a mail shot drop to every home in England and you may have received a leaflet like the one above. It was not addressed personally to the householders and was delivered with other mail shots, which may have meant it did not get the full attention intended. Further national press comment on the project has led the HSCIC to review its plans around patient awareness of the project, which is currently still on hold.

We hope this clarifies the current position.

Improvements at Rockland Surgery

Those of you who have visited Rockland St Mary Surgery recently will have noticed some changes – the builders and decorators have been in!

One of the doctor's consultation rooms has been decorated, has new flooring and a lighter feel. The second room is being upgraded in late April.



The waiting room has also seen a makeover with new flooring and seating. Decoration will follow with an upgraded disabled toilet. This latest investment in our Rockland St Mary surgery follows the new electronic doors installed last year.

Latest Community Gym

There are several 'outdoor gyms' that have sprung up around our patch and we are pleased to be able to support the latest 'community gym' now open in Loddon.

Lesley, our recently retired Practice Nurse, and her husband have been involved with seeing this come to fruition.

NOW OPEN

COMMUNITY GYM
at the Jubilee Hall, George Lane, Loddon

Run by two fully-qualified instructors with a wide range of equipment including treadmills, weights, cross-trainer, bikes, rowing machines

For all abilities aged 16 and over

Cost £3 per person for each session - no joining fee - multi-session tickets also available at discounted prices

Are you looking to introduce more exercise into your life or build on your normal fitness routine? Look no further.

The Gym is open on the following weekdays throughout the year (excluding public holidays)

EASTERN RIVERS COMMUNITY GYM AT LODDON

Monday 2.30pm to 6pm
Tuesday 4.30pm to 7.30pm
Friday 10.30am to 12.30pm

Run by the community for the community

Supported by South Norfolk and active norfolk

For details call 07580-796044 or visit www.loddoncommunitygym.com

focus on.....

Eczema

We continue our series of newsletter features on specific clinical matters and in this edition we take a look at atopic eczema, also known as atopic dermatitis, the most common form of eczema.

Eczema is a condition that causes the skin to become itchy, red, dry and cracked and can be a long term chronic condition.

Atopic eczema mainly affects children but can continue into adulthood. It commonly occurs in areas with folds of skin such as behind the knees, the inside of elbows, on the side of the neck and around the ears and eyes.

Atopic eczema can vary in severity and most people are only mildly affected. Severe symptoms include cracked, sore and bleeding skin and in some cases can mean the involvement of a dermatologist (skin specialist) at the hospital.

People with atopic eczema usually have periods when symptoms are less noticeable, as well as flare ups when symptoms become more severe.

The exact causes of atopic eczema are unknown however it often occurs in people who have allergies. Atopic eczema can run in families and often occurs alongside other conditions such as asthma and hay fever.

Atopic eczema usually clears up or significantly improves as children grow up. In over 50% of cases it clears up by the time a child reaches the age of 11 and in 65% of cases by the age of 16.

It can have a severe impact on daily life and is often difficult to cope with both physically and mentally. Many types of treatment can be used to control the symptoms of the condition including

medication and self help techniques.

There is no cure for atopic eczema but treatments can ease the symptoms. Medications (usually creams and emollients) are used much of the time with mild steroid treatments used to reduce swelling and redness during flare ups. Different strengths are used for different parts of the body. Other oral medications are sometimes used to manage the symptoms. These include antihistamines for severe itching, oral steroids for severe symptoms and antibiotics if the eczema becomes infected.

There are a range of self care techniques that can also help ease symptoms. These include:

Scratching – this can aggravate the skin, also increasing the risk of infection. It will be hard but try and stop children scratching their skin but keeping finger nails short will minimise damage to the skin. Tapping the skin rather than scratching may help.

Avoid triggers – once the triggers have been identified, try and avoid them. For example, avoid certain fabrics, sticking to natural materials such as cotton. If heat aggravates your eczema, keep the rooms in the house cool and finally avoid using soaps or detergents with added fragrances or colourings.

Diet – dietary changes should not be made without speaking to the doctor. Some foods have been shown to trigger eczema symptoms, although it may not be healthy to cut these out completely without medical advice, particularly in young children.

Hormonal changes in women, stress and vigorous exercise can all trigger eczema, which are things that can be hard to manage. If you need help and advice about the management of eczema, our GPs are happy to discuss this with you.