



Welcome to our latest Practice newsletter. This edition previews our 'send us a postcard' campaign, where we hope to rely on some honest feedback from you about the services we offer. Our Managing Partner also provides his personal view on how, despite some of the challenges facing some GP Practices, we aim to continue to provide the appropriate care at the appropriate time for all our patients. Our 'focus on series' features the new specialised service that we

have access to for patients wishing to quit smoking and there are a few reminders around ordering repeat prescriptions that should ensure your orders are processed accurately. You can also catch up with what three of our staff have been doing to raise money for Asthma UK and Breast Cancer Awareness. Enjoy the read!

Send us a postcard!



So, with the summer months here, what's this all about?

Whilst we are able to provide travel advice and vaccinations for those travelling to exotic climes and would welcome a postcard to hear how much of a good time you are having, during July and August, we will also be asking you to send us a postcard with feedback about the Practice!

Working with our Patient Reference Group we are seeking patient views on a number of the services we provide. Whether it is a consultation with the doctor, a meeting with the nurse, contact with the reception team or using our dispensary, each postcard has a general question about your most recent experience with the Practice. Each of the four postcard designs also carries a second question around one of these four areas.

1. Waiting times in the surgery to see a clinician
2. Understanding what times of the day we offer appointments
3. Understanding how to obtain medical care when we are not open
4. Other medical services you would like us to offer

Our Patient Reference Group has helped design the postcards and these will be available in both surgeries with an on-line version also available. We plan to feedback the results in subsequent newsletters and on our web site.

If you are interested in joining the Patient Reference Group, then please contact us via our web site where you can find out more information about the Group and the role it plays in the Practice.



It's business as usual at Heathgate

As Gary Whiting, our Managing Partner explains

It appears there is not a day that goes by without the media carrying a story about what is happening in GP surgeries up and down the country with General Practice increasingly dictating the political debate. Sometimes it is difficult to separate 'creative journalism' from an underlying story. I can see why this backdrop can place concerns in the minds of patients about the quality and type of services we provide and can affect the morale of staff working in the Practice.



In the last ten days I have read articles about patients being asked to re-register at other surgeries, six week waits for routine appointments, a recruitment crisis in most Practices, and plans to publish more league tables on the quality of services provided by GPs. I accept the saying that there is sometimes 'no smoke without fire' and it would be wrong of me not to acknowledge that there are specific situations or circumstances where things don't quite happen as they should or apply only to specific surgeries. Where so, I would hope that the management and clinicians in those Practices reflect on the issues affecting them and look to find a local solution.

The other saying is 'not to tar everyone with the same brush' and that's the message that I would like to send to our patients. We have a committed team of clinicians and support staff at Heathgate that work with our patients, aiming to provide the right care at the right time in the right location. We currently have a full compliment of doctors and nurses and offer more appointments now, over longer periods of the day, than we have ever done before.

Waiting times are always a controversial subject and the demand for appointments has changed dramatically over the past ten years. There are many different reasons for this including, an ageing population, an increase in the number of patients with long term conditions such as asthma and diabetes and the changing expectations of patients. These have all affected, at times, the waiting time to see a doctor but we have reacted to this with the introduction of telephone appointments, early morning and later evening appointments. We continue to see patients with an urgent same day need on the day.

To help maintain good access to our services, we do ask patients that move outside of our Practice area to re-register with their new local Practice, so that we can provide a safe, quality service to a manageable number of patients that live locally to our surgeries in Poringland and Rockland St Mary.

Finally, we continue to listen to patients' views and have an active Patient Group that helps us shape some of the services we provide. I am proud of the whole team at Heathgate who are committed to their roles and the message from us all is that it is 'business as usual' here and where we need to make changes to meet clinical need and the expectations of the Department of Health, we always do so with patients at the heart of the decisions we make.

Meningococcal C (Men C) vaccination for freshers

Later this year, along with their formal offer of a University or College place, students aged between 17 and 25, attending further education for the first time, can expect to receive an invitation to attend the surgery for a booster Men C vaccination. The recommendation from NHS England is that students should receive a booster vaccination before they leave to start their studies to reduce the risk of getting the disease, which can spread quickly amongst new close knit groups of young people if there is an unsuspected carrier amongst them.

focus on..... Smoking (and quitting!)



This edition of 'focus on' highlights a new service we are using to help patients quit smoking.



About 100,000 people in the UK die each year because of smoking. Smoking related deaths are mainly due to cancer, respiratory illnesses and heart disease. Cigarettes contain over 4,000 toxic chemicals and around 50 of these can cause cancer.

The life expectancy of long-term smokers is about 10 years less than a non-smoker. Put another way, in the UK about 8 out of 10 non-smokers live past the age of 70 but only half of long-term smokers live past 70. Men who smoke are more than twice as likely to suffer from impotence or erectile dysfunction as non-smokers and smoking in pregnancy can increase the risks of miscarriage and congenital defects in the baby.

As well as the direct health risks associated with smoking, both for the smoker and those around them, it is expensive, can increase life insurance premiums, dull senses reducing the enjoyment of food and drink as well as creating a stale smell on clothes, hair and skin. A 20 a day smoker will spend more than £37,000 on cigarettes over the next 20 years.

The good news is that stopping smoking can make a big difference to your health. It is never too late to stop smoking to greatly benefit your health. There are many people that have given up already. In 1972, just under half the adult population in the UK were smokers. By 1990 this had fallen to just under a third and at present around a sixth of adults are smokers. Let's hope this trend continues.

The Practice now has direct access to the specialist stop smoking service called Smoke Free Norfolk. Details of how the specialist advisers can help you quit is available via their website at www.smokefreenorfolk.nhs.uk or by calling the direct quit line on 0800 0854 113. You do not need a referral from the surgery and a direct call from someone trying to quit often shows a stronger determination to succeed. Do you smoke? Go on, give it a go.



Help us ensure your prescription is correct

Every month we prepare over 8,000 repeat prescriptions. That's a lot of contact from patients or their carers and a lot of paper! There are now several ways that you can order your repeat prescription; on-line, by telephone, in person or by returning the tear of slip.

Our on-line service, which now accounts for over 60% of repeat orders, is probably the most accurate way to request repeat

medication as patient's access their personal medical record and indicate which items they need.

The repeat slip also lists the items available, but we would ask that only items that are required are ticked rather than everything on the list. When items are ordered in person our receptionists are trained to read items back to you to ensure they have ordered those required.

In terms of telephone requests, this is where most mistakes could occur and so a clear answer phone message, spelling the drug name if necessary and quoting the strength and dose will help reduce errors.

Staffing news

Success for Dr Wallace in the London Marathon

Since our last newsletter, we can report on the success of three of our staff that have taken to the streets in different ways!

First of all, along with 36,000 other runners on a warm day in April, Dr Daniel Wallace (the one on the left in the picture below!!) successfully completed this year's London Marathon, in a very respectful time of 4 hours and 18 minutes.

He said 'the whole experience was tremendous, spurred on by the thousands of people that lined the route, providing the encouragement I needed'.



Dr Wallace has raised over £2,700 for Asthma UK, the charity at the forefront of research into the condition, providing award winning support and information for sufferers and life changing public awareness campaigns.

He would like to thank patients, staff, friends and family who supported his fundraising efforts and said 'I was truly amazed at the generosity of everyone.'

Liz and Nettie prove 'these boots are made for walking'



On a damp Saturday evening in May, Dispenser Liz Bruce and Practice Nurse Nettie Ridley joined thousands of people in Edinburgh (they both have Scottish ties) in this year's 2014 'Moon Walk' in the City.

Raising money for Breast Cancer Awareness, they enjoyed their midnight walk, supported by the carnival atmosphere that filled the streets of Edinburgh. The picture above shows the two of them crossing the finishing line with their 'Hero Ami' banner, which recognises the way a close family member handled and managed her own diagnosis of the condition last year.

Liz, speaking on behalf of both said 'we had a great time and would like to thank all our friends, family, colleagues and many patients that supported our fundraising, which is heading towards £1,500.'

Goodbye Dr Krupa and Dr Brookings

We say goodbye and good luck to these Doctors who complete their GP Training programmes with us in July. Dr Brookings has a post with Wroxham & Hoveton Surgery and Dr Krupa will be undertaking locum work in Norfolk.