

THE SANDRINGHAM PRACTICE

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NEWSLETTER - November 2012

Hello everyone,

This is an important newsletter which details significant changes to our clinicians, ways of working and appointment system.

So what are the changes?

PERSONNEL CHANGES

To set the scene for our changes we have recruited 4 new administration staff who will generally be your main first point of contact. Patient feedback has so far been very positive on the new staff and all front line staff have recently been reminded to wear their name badges, so if you feel you have had particularly good service or otherwise please let me know. Their training will continue over the coming months and we are looking at this as an opportunity to review customer service and training in order to ensure that we provide consistently high standards of service for all patients. Please remember our receptionists are trying to help you at all times and contrary to the belief of some patients they cannot offer something which isn't available to them but if you feel we are falling short on our service offering please let me know.

The most significant changes relate to the doctors.

Dr Love will after operating on reduced hours for over 18 months, finally finish with us just before Christmas. As a practice we very much appreciate his support, direction, dedication and leadership over in excess of 35 years, his astute mind will be missed.

Dr Sykes reduced his hours around 12 months ago and from the beginning of January he has taken the decision to step down as a partner at the Practice, in order to focus on patient contact rather than the ever increasing management burden within General Practice. We hope he will continue seeing patients over the coming months which I believe is the work he best enjoys.

Dr Hassan as a few keen eyes may have noticed, has recently taken over as Senior Partner, though the signage has taken rather longer to arrive than anticipated! Dr Hassan will be working over four full days each week.

Dr Strachan will be working over two full days per week.

Dr Turner will also be working over two full days per week.

Dr Mazai has been with us now for over 3 years, the last 21 months as a partner and will be working over four full days each week.

Dr Kirkman officially left us at the end of September, though along with Drs Khan and Jones over the coming weeks, her support will see us through until to our new doctors start to arrive in December.

All of the above changes are planned for implementation during week commencing 17 December and once established we propose to advertise the working week of each of our doctors.

We are extremely pleased to announce that Dr Auckloo will be joining us on 17 December as a Partner. She has been working in another part of Doncaster for some time and will be working over four full days per week.

During April we will also be joined by Dr Vicary as a new partner working across three full days per week.

Both Drs Auckloo and Vicary come very highly recommended and we look forward to their injection of youthful enthusiasm and strong clinical abilities to move the practice forward in the period of NHS change and that General Practice in particular is facing.

APPOINTMENT SYSTEM

Dr Sykes has highlighted in his previous newsletters high patient demand for appointments. We have been through a very difficult time as a practice with GP absences coinciding with a new computer system and a plethora of First Contact Nurses and more lately Locum doctors. This certainly hasn't been ideal from a patient perspective or for the practice with many hours of hard labour from everyone within the practice, clinicians in particular. Two particular learning points have surfaced over this period.

Patients queuing at 8 o'clock on a Monday morning has become too much of a feature and a reflection on you as patients being unable to book suitable appointments. This is not good news for those of you who can and do queue or the many who work and are unlikely to be able to call at this time on a Monday morning.

We have made extensive use of First Contact Practitioners (FCP) who are very highly skilled nurses who can see and treat a wider range of conditions than even our existing Nurse Prescribers. There have been issues over continuity and follow ups as we have used no less than 16 FCPs over this period. On the days when the First Contact Practitioners worked however, it was very apparent that the workload for our stretched duty doctors was significantly eased. Our two existing Nurse Prescribers are currently undertaking the similar training to allow them to operate at a higher level, whilst retaining continuity of care. We are also looking to recruit a third Advanced Nurse Practitioner to provide between them full cover 5 days a week.

So to try and resolve the general issue of best managing our appointment system what are we looking to do?

We will be providing more pre-bookable appointments with our doctors and this will be starting from week commencing 17 December. In part this will be achieved by freeing up some of the duty doctor appointments for routine bookings. These routine appointments will be evenly spread through the week and released in blocks, approximately 1/3 released 2 weeks in advance, 1/3 each Monday for that week and the remainder on the day of the appointment. We are coming up to our busiest seasonal time of the year, between January and end of March and we would ask that you do try and bear with us here, it is unlikely we will achieve the best balance of appointments at the first attempt!

In order to be able to release more doctor appointments for routine bookings we have to deal with 'acute' cases as we call them that require same day attention. We are therefore looking to move to a system whereby all same day requests to be seen are with one of our Nurse Prescribers or Acute Illness Nurses. To be clear we are not operating a triage system as seen at many surgeries. The purpose is to allow our highly trained Nurse Practitioners to attend to same day presentations. In many cases the Nurses will be able to assess and treat patients though if this is not possible, the patient will be referred to or seen by the duty doctor. As the nurses skill levels, training and experience increases, this process should streamline further. Dr Sykes strap line from his May Newsletter read. . . . *'The Nurses will of course liaise closely with the Doctors regarding their duties and will always ask the Duty Doctor to see a patient when it is necessary. This overall transition will take a little while but will be continuing through the summer'*. Granted we are later than expected but we will get there in the end!

Once the details are confirmed we are looking to provide details of each of the doctors working week and whilst they may be subject to change, it should help you with booking the GP of your choice. We are also looking to provide clear guidance to our receptionists over appointment booking. Please do not feel offended if the receptionist asks why you are looking to see a clinician, this is quite necessary and normal.

These are quite fundamental changes, and once again we would ask that you bear with us over the coming months whilst we refine the system as our previous one is unsustainable given the ever increasing levels of patient demand and pulls on the doctors time.

Richard Langthorp, Practice Manager

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