

THE SANDRINGHAM PRACTICE

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NEWSLETTER - July 2013

Hello everyone,

This is the first Practice Newsletter we have had now for some time and thought it useful to advise some recent and forthcoming changes.

PERSONNEL CHANGES

As most of you will be aware Dr Love retired just before Christmas though pops in from occasionally, he is keeping well in himself. You may see Dr Sykes making guest appearances from time to time when we are short and seems to be enjoying himself.

Dr Auckloo and Dr Vicary are both settling in well but is with regret to advise you that Dr Mazai who joined us 4 years ago will be leaving the practice to move abroad later this month. He has proved extremely hard working and devoted and he will be sadly missed, we wish him well.

We have a new partner who is due to start in August, Dr Udom who we have had great reports about so look forward to welcoming him into the team.

Dr Pal, our latest GP Registrar in training will be finishing her stint with us in early August though for the time being she will not be replaced immediately. We wish her well on her future career and thank her for her input over the last 6 months.

NEW TEXTING REMINDER SYSTEM

In response to seeing worryingly large numbers of appointments being wasted each week, the practice has invested in a new Text appointment reminder system, which some of you may have experienced. This does provide a prompt for your appointments and allow you to cancel if no longer needed. Last summer we were losing over 250 appointments each month and we are hopeful of reductions. Please do help us by minimising lost appointments and let us have up to date mobile numbers.

HEATING (or rather cooling!)

We have long complained to the old PCT over the excessive temperatures in the building, dating back to our first day in July 2006 when we moved in when temperatures started at 30 deg c at 7am and went up from there! One of our younger and hopefully fitter members of staff recently fainted in the heat and suffered quite a nasty bang on her head. This has been reported to the landlord who are currently monitoring, but we do appreciate it is an issue for patients too. If you have any written comments on the summer temperatures in the building I will be pleased to forward these on to the landlord.

OPENING HOURS

It is likely that we will look to start opening at least one morning from 7.30 each morning for pre-bookable appointments. The Practice needs to submit a formal proposal to our new governing body for approval first and we need to re-jig our staffing rota but would expect this to be in place by the autumn. Watch this space.

HOME VISITS

The number of home visit request have increased over recent months which we believe reflects the increasing medical needs of our patients and we continue to visit housebound patients when there is a clinical need. We do have some instances of doctors calling on patients when home visits have been requested and patient being 'out' either shopping, attending other appointments or at the Practice!

The doctors would ask that visits are only requested when patients are genuinely housebound, that is physically unable to leave the house since the time taken for a single home visit could have allowed that doctor to see 3 to 4 patients at the practice.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

The Practice has been suffering from quite a lot of moans and groans from patients over recent weeks, maybe compounded by the heat? We are not perfect but we do try. Typically issues revolve around telephone answering or appointments. We are aware of issues surround the telephones and are in the process of altering the staffing rota to enable the practice to accept the telephones from 8 am rather than 8.30 with more staff. Whilst understanding possible frustration it is very intimidating to be sat behind the reception desk and have a patient shouting at them or wagging their finger in their face. Another source of patient irritation appears to be prescriptions and repeat prescriptions in particular. Whilst there may always be cases where medication is lost or similar, please remember it is a patient's responsibility to order medication in good time and allow a minimum of two clear working days for repeat items.

APPOINTMENTS

We have had significant pressure on our appointment system for at least two years now. Some feedback has suggested that we have too many patients to cope with. I must admit it does feel like that sometimes but we now have slightly fewer patients than we had too years ago! Patient demands and expectation have certainly increased and the changes made to the appointment system have attempted to improve the availability of pre-bookable doctor appointments, of which we now have far more than we ever have. Like a number of Practices in Doncaster we operate a same day triage system. This is designed to assess requests for same day intervention by either skilled nurse or doctor and treat accordingly with advice or face to face consultation either that day or in the future. The triage booking system is not popular with everyone though I have had some recent positive comments. Triage does filter out a significant number of patients who do not need to be seen when advice can be offered which in turn enables us to offer more pre-bookable appointments, which are released each day for the following day, the day after and 7 days later.

NHS CHANGES

Perhaps this should have been at the start of this Newsletter. As you will be aware there have been a lot of changes behind the scenes within the Health Service, though many are hidden from view. In general terms, the long standing relationships built over a number of years in Doncaster have now been lost, with the new organisational body NHS England regional office based in Rotherham. There are a few familiar names still around but not many. There has been a noticeable change in culture and this has in itself created a lot of work in General Practice, though this is very different from the well advertised 'GP Commissioning' organisation, which is based in Doncaster and according to the Press holds most of the money within the NHS! One relevant end result from these changes is the closing down of the Doncaster PALs office who were able to guide and support amongst other things complaints and patients wishing to change practice. You may wish to read a recent article from the Chair of the Royal College of General Practitioners who wrote in the Times a few days ago, please see separate sheet for further information as to some of the challenges faced. . . .

On behalf of the Practice, I do wish you all a pleasant summer but please be aware our car park is a busy and dangerous area for young children who from time to time do use it as a cycle park. For their own safety please can parents try and keep children from playing or cycling around the car park and for motorists please have a second glance to make sure a bike hasn't popped out behind you when you weren't looking!

Thank you

Richard Langthorp

Richard Langthorp, Practice Manager

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