



**Billericay Medical Practice**  
**Patient Participation Group Newsletter**  
**March 2022**

**Welcome**

A PPG Zoom meeting was held in February attended by Dr. Cockcroft, the lead GP and the Practice Manager Peter Tyrell. This year the committee would have held an AGM about this time, but like many other organisations, is holding off for now. Very little activity has occurred on which to report given the COVID restrictions.

A summary of recent Practice news presented at this meeting follows.

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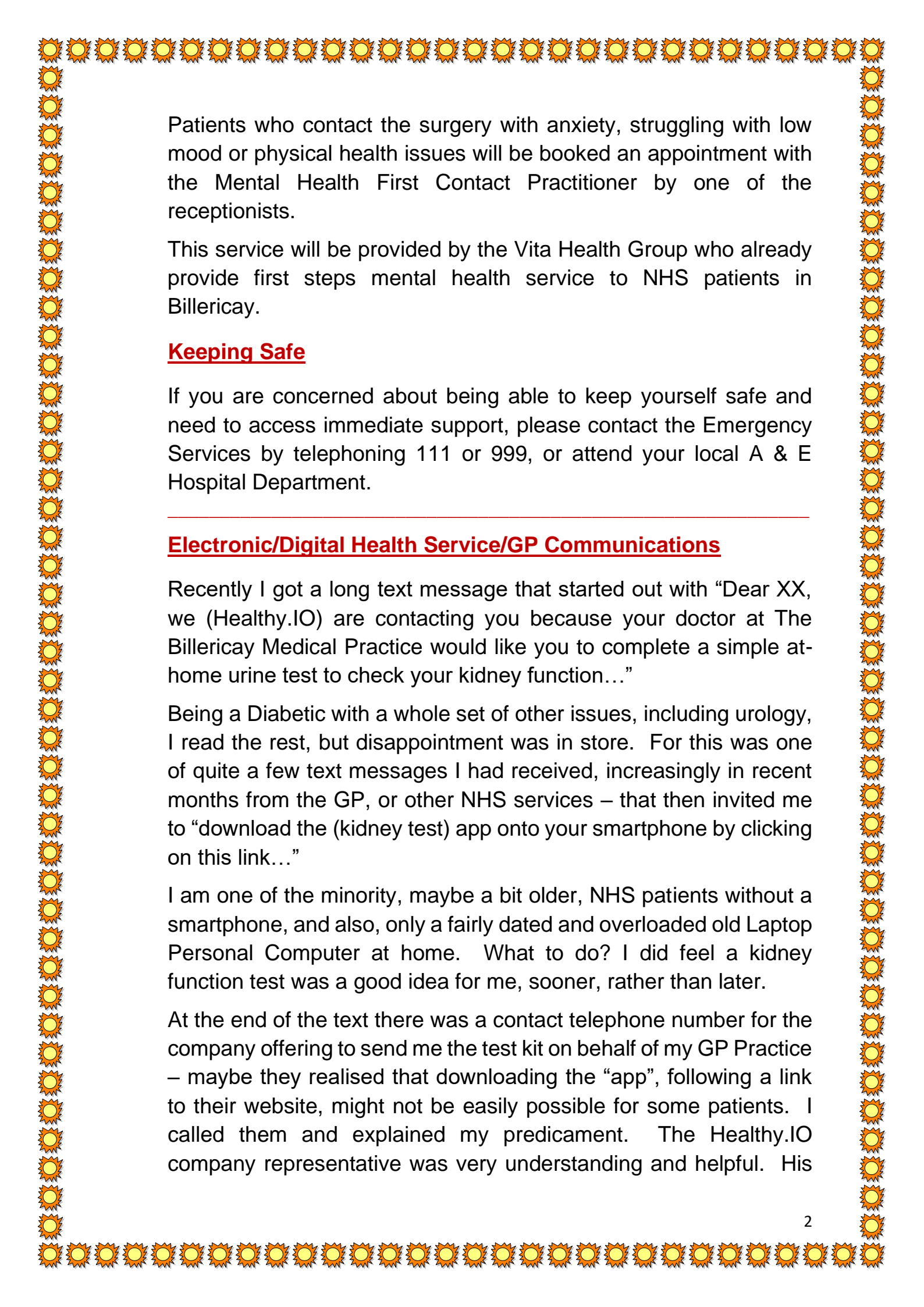
**Practice Report**

A **new Registrar trainee GP** Dr. Amit Mirchandani has started his six-month placement at the Practice from February. Another new commissioned service by the Basildon and Brentwood CCG is now being provided by Healthy.IO – to provide early detection of Chronic Kidney Disease. In essence, eligible patients are contacted direct by Healthy.IO by SMS text message or letter inviting them to take part in this screening service. A urine testing kit is then provided that the patient uses at home and sends results to the GP Practice using a smartphone App. One of our PPG committee members also reports on this service in this newsletter...

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**Billericay Winter Access Hub:** The Billericay Primary Care Network of local GP Practices is currently trying to get the extended hours GP HUB moved into the Billericay Health Centre. The HUB would be for all patients in Billericay.

All GP practices in Billericay will have access to the service of a **Mental Health First Contact Practitioner** attached to their GP Practice from the end of February 2022. Telephone appointments will be for 30 minutes with a Mental Health expert who can provide help and support and direct patients onto other services and prescribe medication if required.



Patients who contact the surgery with anxiety, struggling with low mood or physical health issues will be booked an appointment with the Mental Health First Contact Practitioner by one of the receptionists.

This service will be provided by the Vita Health Group who already provide first steps mental health service to NHS patients in Billericay.

### **Keeping Safe**

If you are concerned about being able to keep yourself safe and need to access immediate support, please contact the Emergency Services by telephoning 111 or 999, or attend your local A & E Hospital Department.

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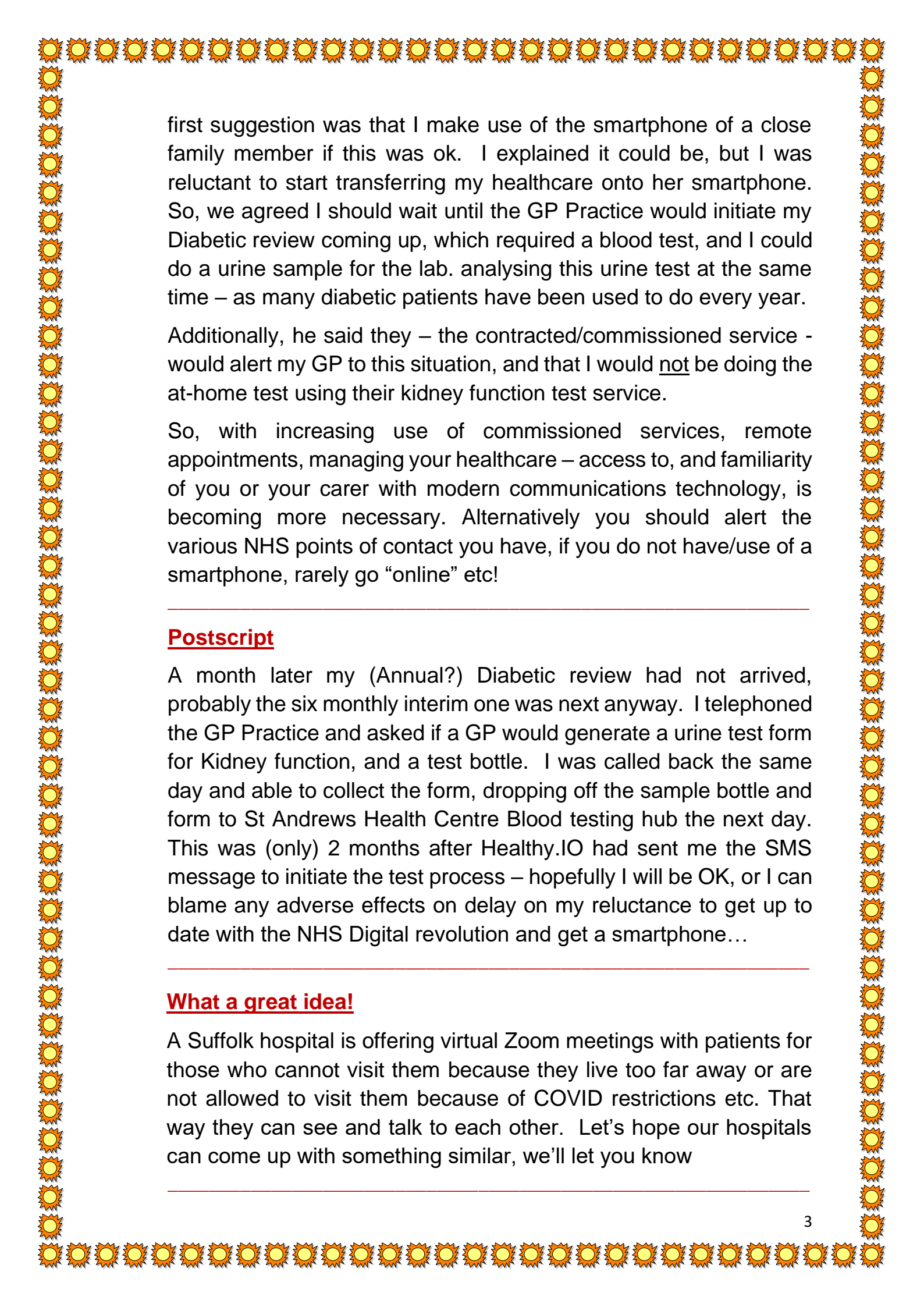
### **Electronic/Digital Health Service/GP Communications**

Recently I got a long text message that started out with “Dear XX, we (Healthy.IO) are contacting you because your doctor at The Billericay Medical Practice would like you to complete a simple at-home urine test to check your kidney function...”

Being a Diabetic with a whole set of other issues, including urology, I read the rest, but disappointment was in store. For this was one of quite a few text messages I had received, increasingly in recent months from the GP, or other NHS services – that then invited me to “download the (kidney test) app onto your smartphone by clicking on this link...”

I am one of the minority, maybe a bit older, NHS patients without a smartphone, and also, only a fairly dated and overloaded old Laptop Personal Computer at home. What to do? I did feel a kidney function test was a good idea for me, sooner, rather than later.

At the end of the text there was a contact telephone number for the company offering to send me the test kit on behalf of my GP Practice – maybe they realised that downloading the “app”, following a link to their website, might not be easily possible for some patients. I called them and explained my predicament. The Healthy.IO company representative was very understanding and helpful. His



first suggestion was that I make use of the smartphone of a close family member if this was ok. I explained it could be, but I was reluctant to start transferring my healthcare onto her smartphone. So, we agreed I should wait until the GP Practice would initiate my Diabetic review coming up, which required a blood test, and I could do a urine sample for the lab. analysing this urine test at the same time – as many diabetic patients have been used to do every year.

Additionally, he said they – the contracted/commissioned service - would alert my GP to this situation, and that I would not be doing the at-home test using their kidney function test service.

So, with increasing use of commissioned services, remote appointments, managing your healthcare – access to, and familiarity of you or your carer with modern communications technology, is becoming more necessary. Alternatively you should alert the various NHS points of contact you have, if you do not have/use of a smartphone, rarely go “online” etc!

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### **Postscript**

A month later my (Annual?) Diabetic review had not arrived, probably the six monthly interim one was next anyway. I telephoned the GP Practice and asked if a GP would generate a urine test form for Kidney function, and a test bottle. I was called back the same day and able to collect the form, dropping off the sample bottle and form to St Andrews Health Centre Blood testing hub the next day. This was (only) 2 months after Healthy.IO had sent me the SMS message to initiate the test process – hopefully I will be OK, or I can blame any adverse effects on delay on my reluctance to get up to date with the NHS Digital revolution and get a smartphone...

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### **What a great idea!**

A Suffolk hospital is offering virtual Zoom meetings with patients for those who cannot visit them because they live too far away or are not allowed to visit them because of COVID restrictions etc. That way they can see and talk to each other. Let's hope our hospitals can come up with something similar, we'll let you know