

Patient Participation Group - Chairman's Report (Councillor, John Barnes) March 2015

The PRG was created at the instance of Dr Woodgate in 2011, but it did not establish itself in its present form as the Committee of the PPG until 2013; and it was not until we had been meeting for a year that we decided that we ought to hold an annual general meeting and to invite all the members of the Patient Participation Group to it.

The Group appears to have made a stuttering start, through no fault of its very active Secretary, Peter Skipwith. I was invited to take the chair at the meeting of 14 November 2013, as the previous volunteer for that position could not be present, and was subsequently confirmed in post and Claudette Neville subsequently became my Vice Chairman.

My thanks are due to both Peter and Claudette, but I know that Claudette won't mind if tonight I single out Peter, since he has now decided to leave the village and perforce resigned. Without his efforts there probably would not be a PPG and I am sure the entire Committee would join me in expressing our warm appreciation of all that he has achieved as our Secretary. Claudette has agreed to take on the task of Minutes Secretary but we are urgently looking for someone with IT skills to manage the Virtual membership with which I know Claudette is struggling. I should also like to thank the committee for their efforts during the year. In particular I must single out Dorothy Palmer, who is leaving us for the flats of Cambridgeshire to live near her family. Dorothy's expertise and her willingness to attend area meetings have been invaluable to the PPG. Our warmest thanks and good wishes go with her.

The PPG attended the Burwash Annual Assembly last year and manned stalls at both the Burwash Fete and that in Burwash Weald. We have been recruiting as many and as representative a group of patients as we can to act as a sounding board for the practice, and into whose patient experiences and ideas about improving services we can tap. We now have 114 members, with a reasonable spread of age and gender balance, but we could do with far more. We also have vacancies for 3 new members of the committee so would be happy to hear from anyone interested in joining us, particularly if they have IT skills!

Our major work this year has been developing, in conjunction with the Practice Manager, a more user friendly system to handle complaints and one which asks also for constructive suggestions for improvements in the service. The Practice wants to learn from patient experience and to catch things early if they start to go wrong.

Last year in light of problems with the dispensing service, which in turn were largely down to problems with a new computer system, we met with the Practice Dispenser. As a result of that meeting we assisted the Practice manager in issuing a survey this year to get feedback from patients' about their experience with repeat prescriptions. By the time it was underway, the new computer system was bedded in and the survey, while it revealed some ongoing problems, suggested that these were confined to a small number of cases. There were no systematic problems that could be identified, but the feedback will help dispensary staff to minimise error. We hope to repeat the survey in a year's time with some improvements learnt from the first survey. We do urge all patients to check their medication before leaving the surgery as no system is completely error proof.

The Practice has also made progress with improvements to the appointments system. We were asked to comment on what was suggested and modifications were made in the light of our comments. We are going to help with piloting online access for a number of appointments each week.

We cannot take credit for, but we welcome the new electronic check in which has been funded by the Friends.

I have singled out a few areas of work, but our discussions have ranged more widely and, mainly through the efforts of Dorothy and Claudette, we have also contributed to wider discussions within the CCG.

Claudette has taken on the task of providing regular bulletins in all 3 parish magazines, which we hope will increase the visibility of our work and help recruit more members. We have also established means within the surgery by which to keep patients in touch with the PPG.

Finally we have commented on service developments, most notably last year the decision to centralise consultant maternity services in the interests of patient safety. We supported that move and suggested that the consultant led unit should be in Hastings. However, we argued also for the retention of the midwife led unit at Crowborough. We are glad to report that the decision reached was in accordance with our views.