

CASTLE MEAD MEDICAL CENTRE

26/08/2020

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A letter from the Partners at Castle Mead Medical Centre and Pine Close Surgery

Dear patients,

Firstly, the Partners at Castle Mead Medical Centre and Pine Close Surgery would like to thank you all for your support and patience during this unprecedented period. The Covid-19 pandemic has forced us to adapt our ways of working in a manner and time frame which has never been seen before in General Practice. The various changes we have implemented have been made in line with national and local recommendations, to ensure the ongoing safety of our staff and you as patients.

Some of the more significant changes that we have incorporated into our daily practice include the use of technology which was not in place before, including telephone and video consultation and photos where appropriate. Limiting the patient footfall through the surgery in the form of face to face appointments has been an important step to protect vulnerable patients and our staff, which is imperative to maintain a reliable and efficient service.

As GP's and nurses, it is our 'bread and butter' to see patients in the surgery and of course in many ways we prefer this, as we recognise its crucial role in maintaining the rapport we rely on but also to assess you. We have not closed our doors and have been seeing patients in surgery, when we feel it is clinically indicated.

It is worth saying; we feel some of the changes made are valuable as we look to the future of General Practice, as demand for appointments prior to Covid-19 was ever increasing. We are keen to involve you in looking to the future and your views are very important to us. Our current 3rd year medical student has been working alongside Dr Patterson and Dr Squires May to develop a survey which has been sent out to 200 patients, who have had recent contact with the practice. We would be happy to send you a paper or electronic questionnaire; please contact reception who can arrange to send you the link by text or in the post.

We of course understand that the temporary closure of Pine Close Surgery, except for the dispensary, has posed some challenges for some patients and their families who would normally attend the branch surgery. We are keen to ensure we protect the staff in the dispensary to safeguard the ongoing medication service provided here. Furthermore, maintaining one site is helpful in the unfortunate instance of staff illness which has been inevitable but also seeing patients in the required and stipulated amber (medium and low risk) and green rooms (shielding patients, pregnant women and new-borns). All high risk patients with a fever or possible Covid-19 symptoms are seen in 'hot clinics' run by the CCG. Currently they are based in

Loughborough and New Parks in Leicester. We continue to urge that the CCG set up a hot clinic more locally to Hinckley and Bosworth but unfortunately there are no current plans for this.

In recent weeks, we have experienced an exceptional increase in workload, something which has been echoed by GP surgeries throughout the UK. When the initial pandemic hit, we were very much focussing on acute and emergency medical problems including numerous presentations of Covid-19. We dedicated significant time to our vulnerable patients including those in nursing and care home settings. We engaged volunteer services for patients in need and developed advanced care plans with many patients. Much of our routine work had to be put on hold. It is therefore understandable that we are now catching up with 5 months of work but moreover, dealing with additional unfunded work passed to us by hospitals, who also have a backlog of routine work to do.

We appreciate the difficulty, at times, of getting an appointment but we want to assure you we are working tirelessly to meet the demand to the best of our ability, in circumstances which are new and challenging. We are looking to ensure we provide a combination of both on the day and pre-bookable appointments again soon, but will also be planning for a possible second wave over the winter months.

It is of paramount importance that we continue to practice safely and this means you may not be able to get a routine appointment instantly on contacting the practice, as we are unable to provide an unlimited on the day service for both routine and urgent cases.

Once again we thank you for your understanding and many positive comments we have received during this pandemic.

Best Wishes

Dr Rachel Glastonbury, Dr Raymond Dockrell, Dr Julia Patterson, Dr Ashleigh Squires May and Dr Ian Abraham