

ST. GEORGE'S MEDICAL PRACTICE PATIENT NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER 2023

HELLO... AND WELCOME!

Welcome to the newsletter of the Patients' Forum for St. George's Medical Practice.

This Patient Forum is a group of volunteer patients, carers and GP practice staff who meet regularly to discuss and support the running of their GP practice.

The Forum looks at the services the practice offers, patient experience and how improvements can be made for the benefit of patients and the practice. Each group is different, but they all have the aim of making sure that the GP practice puts the patient, and improving health, at the heart of everything it does.

JOINING THE PATIENTS' FORUM

Our Patient Forum is open to every patient on the GP practice list. People of all genders, ages, ethnicities, and those with health conditions and disabilities are encouraged to join. There are no membership requirements except that patients must be registered with the practice. Group members should as far as possible, be representative of the practice population.

If you are interested in becoming a member of St George's Patient Forum, please contact Claire Bicknell or Malcolm Ginever for further information. Email – claire@catena-network.co.uk

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Information on veteran support, what is mental health and why is it important?

FEATURING...

Follow up visit to Paradise Allotments and social prescribing!

AWARENESS MONTH

Did you know...
November is now Movember!
A project raising awareness for men's health! Keep reading to find out more.

PARTICIPATE IN MOVEMBER WITH US!

This is Max Magistri (left) and Ryan Palmer (right), they are both part of our Editorial Team and will be taking part in Movember!

Keep reading to find out more about Movember.



ST GEORGE'S VETERAN SUPPORT

In 1996, November was first declared as Military Awareness Month and since then, the month has been a time to acknowledge the sacrifices our military families make. Returning from military service can be straining on both mind and body. Therefore, there are many services available for military veterans to support both mental and physical health needs. St George's GP surgery is veteran friendly, and you can contact them for help to refer you to a service.

Here is a list of some helpful services for veterans:

OP COURAGE: THE VETERANS MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING SERVICE

This is a service dedicated for military personnel who are approaching discharge from the armed forces as well as veterans. They provide many different services, including mental health help, substance abuse help, employment and housing help, and much more.

For more information on their services, visit:

<https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/armed-forces-community/mental-health/veterans-reservists/>

Veterans can self-refer or be referred by the GP by calling 0300 323 0137 or emailing mevs.mhm@nhs.net

VETERANS GATEWAY

For military veterans and their families looking for advice and support. This service is available 24 hours a day. For more information visit <https://www.veteransgateway.org.uk/> or call 0800 802 1212.

HELP FOR HEROES

This service provides support for wounded, injured, and sick personnel, Veterans, and their families. For more information, visit <https://www.helpforheroes.org.uk>

COMBAT STRESS

This service provides specialized mental health support to military veterans. Visit their website <https://combatstress.org.uk> for more information.

BLESMA

A service dedicated to assisting military veterans who have suffered life changing limb loss or use as well as eyesight. For more information, visit their website <https://blesma.org/>

WHO COUNTS AS A VETERAN?

As long as you have served at least 1 day in the armed forces you are a veteran.

Reservists, soldiers who have left the regular army but are recalled in times of need, who are not currently mobilised are also considered veteran until they return to actively serving.

If you are a mobilised reservist who is registered with Defence Medical Services (DMS), you can find information about accessing NHS healthcare while in active service here:

<https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/armed-forces-community/access-healthcare-in-active-service/>

VETERANS IN THE UK

Currently in the UK there are around 2.4 million Ex-Service British Armed Forces. Around 89% of them are male, and around 60% are aged 65 and over. Every year, there are about 18,000 service people that decide to move back into civilian life with around 2000 of them leaving on medical grounds.

SOCIAL PRESCRIBING AND PARADISE ALLOTMENTS by Max Magistri

What is social prescribing? In a nutshell, social prescribing involves getting an individual in touch with a community of like-minded people with whom they can have regular face to face contact. Spending time with other people is an essential human need and is integral to an individual's mental and physical wellbeing. The role of social prescribing is to accommodate this need. It has been shown to be effective, indeed, NHS England report that 'there is emerging evidence that social prescribing can lead to a range of positive health and wellbeing outcomes from people, such as improved quality of life and emotional wellbeing'.

One way that people can get together as a community is through allotment gardening. Allotment gardening provides an opportunity for people to have face to face contact with others and to enjoy the outdoors; all in all, it is a fantastic way to improve one's physical and mental wellbeing. In a study by Oxford University, it was found that just 'one session of allotment gardening can result in significant improvements in self-esteem and mood'.

There are a few of these projects operating in the Nottingham area. One of these, is currently being run at Paradise Gardens in Ruddington. I was eager to see the effect of this type of social prescription myself and I was invited to join them on the allotment for a day of pulling up and weeds and drinking tea.

Cramped in the space of a small greenhouse, pulling at weeds and collecting tomatoes, I began a conversation with Tony, one of the patients who attends the allotment. 'One day, I remember, I spent the whole day pulling weeds out of the ground. The clarity of mind it gives you is really amazing' he tells me while I pull out the dead remains of a tomato plant from the soil. While I spend time picking off red and yellow tomatoes I mull over his words. It was true, my mind did feel clear, it had stopped its incessant chattering for a moment.



Tony suffers from depression. Around a year back he tells me, he went to the GP for help. However, instead of *just* prescribing medication as is commonplace for many years, the GP also offered a place on the allotment project. ‘Honestly, it’s just being outside with nature and talking with people that makes the difference’ he tells me.

Later on, we decide to have a tea break and I got to chat to Alison, one of the people responsible for running the sessions. I ask her about the evolution of the project. ‘Well, I started off with a plot of land that the council donated us but since then we’ve received extra funding and have been able to extend the plot’. She hands me a book; inside, the pictures tell a story of a project that has gone from leaps to bounds. From the small plot they had started off, to an allotment with vegetable beds, a greenhouse and people milling around. I ask her why she thinks the project made such a difference. She replies, ‘I think it provides a safe, welcoming space for people’.

I also manage to speak to Andrew there, another person on the allotment, who gives me a clearer understanding about the importance of social prescription: ‘For years and years, the approach really has been clinical: people are prescribed medication and put on CBT. But it doesn’t address what is lacking, which is human interaction. What we are seeing now is a move to try something different: to try and provide that’.

I wanted to ask him whether he thought the approach had been successful so far, but then, I had a look and the results, were evident. People were smiling, chatting and talking to one another and importantly, I felt completely relaxed. The conversations with those involved demonstrated the vitality and importance of social prescription. I can only hope that there is more awareness around the efficacy of it and that more and more people can access this type of healthcare close to them.



DOCTOR DOCTOR JOKE OF THE MONTH!

Patient: Doctor! Doctor! I think I need glasses.

Teller: You Certainly do! This is a bank.



WHAT IS MENTAL HEALTH AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Mental health relates to a human's psychological well-being. It defines how we deal with the stresses of daily life, anxieties and ultimately choose healthy decisions. Mental health is important, as struggling with your mental health may lead you on a declining pathway of negativity. Everyone suffers from bad days, but it is how we reflect on these days that matters.

Now you may be wondering, what can affect my mental health?

- **Work related stress**
- **Lack of body confidence**
- **Bullying from others**
- **Illness**
- **Past or current traumas**

These are just a few examples however there are endless causes that can impact your mental health for the worse. Looking after your mental health is so important as it allows us to think more positively and look to divert sadness and other negative emotions.



Men's Mental Health

According to the mental health foundation, 'three times as many men as women die by suicide. Men aged 40 to 49 have the highest suicide rates in the UK.' One of the contributing factors is due to the stigma for men to bottle up their feelings and not share them to others. Traditional gender roles lead men into believing that they should fight their own battles without any help from others. However, this is not the case; you are not weak if you are asking for help!

Student Mental Health

Having assignments and deadlines can be very stressful. You may fear you have not performed well enough, don't have enough time, or maybe feel unorganised. If you are beginning to feel an unhealthy amount of pressure, there are many people that can assist you. Your university or school team, social secretaries or even speaking to a friend. Try not to let the pressure get to you as thinking positively is always the way forward!

Mental Health in General

Anyone can suffer from mental health problems. Here are some self-care tips that can make you feel more positive

- Regular Exercise
- Eating Healthy foods
- Sleep well
- Prioritise tasks
- Have a relaxing night in
- Meet with friends

If you are ever feeling low or are concerned about a friend, or loved one's mental health, here is a QR code you can scan. This will take you to NHS's website where further information on mental health, alongside contact information of services that provide help, is available.



AWARENESS MONTH NOVEMBER

Movember

Movember is a global campaign for men's mental health. It encourages men to grow out their moustaches to participate in challenging the stigma around men's mental health awareness and symbolise solidarity.

Rules for Movember:

- If you want to participate you must simply start with a clean shaven face from November 1st and grow out that Tash!
- And no beards or goatees and no fake moustaches (unless you are a Mo-sister).

You can register at Movember.com to get involved or alternatively donate to a charity that helps men's mental health.

!Don't forget to post your pictures to social media using the relevant hashtags!

#Movember

#MensHealth

#GrowAMo

#MentalHealthAwareness

#SuicidePrevention

#ProstateCancerAwareness

#MoBros

Services for mental health:

The NHS

- We have the NHS for a reason! If you or someone else needs emergency help, call 999 or to speak to someone urgently about your mental health, you can get help from the NHS 111 online or call 111.

Alternatively, you can seek advice and help from mental health charities that provide help with men's mental health, such as:

- Mind– <https://www.mind.org.uk>
- Mental Health UK– <https://mentalhealth-uk.org>
- Heads up Guys– <https://headsupguys.org>
- Mental Health Foundation - <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk>



UK Biobank

SGPG member Rod Jones shares his experience of UK Biobank

UK Biobank

Between 2006 and 2010 many patients, then aged between 40 and 69 from this and many other surgeries were asked to join Biobank. Half a million UK patients participate. It is a large scale prospective biomedical resource providing health and genetic information. The anonymised information is accessed by approved researchers.

Led by Dr Rory Collins with 200 staff, it is funded by the Wellcome Trust, Medical Research Council and Government. As patients, we first gave blood and other samples and did tests on computers. At intervals we are sent questionnaires about such things as activity, diet, social life, attitudes and emotions.

All participants agreed that Biobank could access our health records under strict safeguards. Biobank gets regular updates on participants' health from hospitals. Recently GPs have received a letter asking them to share some coded data on participants. Recognising the pressures, they have ensured that sharing data will require a straightforward administrative task that can be completed in less than a minute. The information provided by GPs will not identify UK Biobank participants. UK Biobank will only receive coded GP data that uses numbers and letters to represent diagnoses, referrals, prescriptions, lab test results and symptoms. UK Biobank will not collect any other information, such as doctors' notes or transcripts of conversations.

Some of us opted to go to a centre where we spent a lot of time in MRI tubes and other devices as well as doing tests on computers.

There is no benefit for participants. However if they discover an immediate life-threatening condition which the person was unaware of, they will tell you. (I know someone whose life was saved by this.)

Participants can access the progress of the scheme and research underway. Biobank holds huge information which is used extensively by researchers. The aim is to discover more about the causes and connections with common life-threatening diseases to improve public health.

Rod Jones

Meet Dr Louise Bevan!

Dr Bevan is one of the partners at St. George's, and we were lucky enough to be able to spend some time with her and ask some questions!



1. Did you always want to be a doctor from an early age?

Yes, I knew I wanted a career in healthcare from secondary school onwards. Biology was always my favourite subject.

2. What is the best thing about being a GP?

In General Practice no day is the same! I love the variety that each day brings and the 'detective' work involved in working out diagnoses and striving to improve patient situations where possible.

3. What do you think is exciting in medicine at the moment? (E.g. new treatments, discoveries, use of AI in surgery?)

The ever expanding scope of online advances is helping to improve General Practice. Online booking and now clinical access via AccuRx systems should improve efficiency and care as they become established.

4. What is your key health tip?

Keep active, in whatever way you can and get outside every day!

5. If you were on TV's Master Chef, what would your signature dish be?

Quick and easy banana loaf cake

Dr Bevan's Quick & Easy Banana Loaf Cake

Line a large loaf tin with greaseproof paper

Pre-heat oven to 150-160 deg C (fan)

Ingredients:-

160g Butter

160g Caster Sugar

2 x Large eggs

½ tsp Vanilla paste / extract

2 x Medium sized ripe bananas – roughly mashed

180g Self raising flour

½ tsp Baking powder

60g Walnuts

60g Raisins

Cream together the butter and sugar until pale and then add everything else and stir pretty vigorously, until well mixed.

Bake for 30-40 mins or until the centre is clear on inserting a skewer

WHAT ARE WE?

The purpose of this newsletter is to encourage members of St. George's Medical Practice to engage with and join the surgery's Patient Forum! Our goal is to create and update a monthly newsletter sharing relevant and helpful information from the practice.

WHO ARE WE?

This is a collaborative project between St George's Patient Forum and a group of students at Nottingham Trent University. Deputy Chair of the Patient Forum Claire Bicknell is working closely with NTU's Dr Jenni Ramone and her BA English students Lydia Sewell, Felicia Bergfast, Ryan Palmer, Ilinca Moraru, Max Magistri, Alex Klocek, and Ellie Morrin.

SOMETHING YOU WANT TO SEE?

If there is anything you would like to see in next month's edition – let us know!
We aim to bring the practice together and create a newsletter enjoyable to everyone!

WANT TO GET INVOLVED?

If you are interested in becoming a member of St George's Patient Forum, please contact Claire Bicknell or Malcom Ginever for further information.
Email – claire@catena-network.co.uk