

Last night I watched a Panorama programme about a large US healthcare company running a number of GP practices in England, sadly the picture painted in these privately run NHS practices was pretty grim. Of course, few of you can be unaware of the pressure on General Practice now, with weekly headlines highlighting difficulty in access and long waiting lists for hospital services having a knock-on effect on us. Unfortunately, we are not immune to these pressures, but I hope that you feel that we are trying to do our best with the resources we have available. I noticed a few weeks ago a sign for a GP offering private appointments locally, the charge is £150 for half an hour plus extra for tests, letters, or referrals. NHS GP practices get around £155 per patient for a whole year of NHS care which I hope you would agree is amazing value for money. GPs remain easy scapegoats with some national newspapers in particular only too happy to criticise us without always considering the underlying poor funding and lack of clinical staff behind their headlines. The UK has among the fewest doctors and nurses per head of population in Europe and despite government efforts GP numbers are static or falling. This is despite rising workload with logged GP and Nurse patient contacts continuing to rise year on year. Practice staff we know are at a high risk of distress and even burn out because of such pressures and unfortunately that seems unlikely to change in the immediate future. Pleasingly most of our patient appreciate all that the team do but I am occasionally made aware of rudeness both by phone and face to face which I find very sad bearing in mind what I have described above. It seems to be particularly our receptionists who bear the brunt of this frankly unacceptable behaviour and we will act when this occurs. Constructive and supportive feedback we welcome, shouting at any member of the practice team is destructive, unhelpful and likely to result in sanctions.

Finally, a plug for some local services with whom we are working increasingly closely.

- Your Health You Way offer weight loss, smoking, and alcohol intake reduction services and can be found via your preferred search engine (or phone 0115 772 2515).
- The Calverton Leisure Centre is a local, warm and welcoming environment. There is a swimming pool, gym and multiple exercise classes. Their membership scheme options can be a very cost-effective means of accessing the leisure facilities.
- The Core Centre also runs a wide variety of sessions for fun, education and fitness.

Phil Rayner