

THE SPINNEY SURGERY NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 2019

Welcome to our second newsletter of 2019! We hope to re-start production of a quarterly newsletter to keep patients up to date with the latest news at the surgery as well as running health campaigns and delivering educational information regarding local services and initiatives.



TEAM INFORMATION

In our Spring edition, we outlined the average day of a GP and went through the roles of our nurses, healthcare assistants and reception team members. In addition to these key roles, an administration team works behind the scenes to help with your care.

Repeat prescribing forms a large part of the daily administration in the practice. Daily tasks for Pam Purnell include issuing routine repeat items, as well as dealing with queries from patients, pharmacies, clinicians, hospitals, care homes. She works closely with our Dispensing Team, Sue Sherwin, Sheila Mulligan and Vanessa Carter. These team members ensure that for dispensing patients there are sufficient drugs, dispensed accurately and efficiently as well as carry out the ordering drugs from wholesalers and carrying out stock checks and reviews.

The Secretarial team consists of Jean Mercer and Lorraine Stork. This team deals with all the referrals made out of the practice, arrangements for appointments, enquiries and liaison with patients, hospitals and other organisations. They deal with the requests for medical records, and information for insurance companies and solicitors.

Amber Walch carries out registrations with the practice, antenatal bookings, clinical document management systems and medical records alongside Alison Orr. Diane McPhee carries out a wide range of tasks, such as pathology test result allocations, reminding patients about their appointments, arranging records for clinics and updating registers and records where necessary.

Corienne Brown, Nikki Murden and Ellie Hales are the medical records summarisers and data administrators. Their role is to ensure that the GP medical records are updated with medical summaries as well as a supporting role in research, audit and information governance. Sarah Smith administers the disease recall system reminding patients when their heart disease, diabetes, asthma checks are due.

Nicole Wheatley is the newest member of the team, joining in May as a Primary Care Support Assistant. Her role looks into finding new ways to provide information to patients and ensuring that these stay up to date and relevant to our patient's needs.

ARRIVALS AND DEPARTURES

The ongoing curse of the A14 road and traffic jams has had an impact on many of our doctors and sadly, we must say goodbye to Dr. Mark Amphlett who has decided to move to a practice closer to his home and will be leaving us in August. Dr. Amphlett has been an asset to The Spinney since first joining us as a registrar and he will be missed by many.

Many of you know Pam Purnell as she processes all our repeat prescriptions and has been a valued member of the Spinney team since 1984. Pam has decided that it's time for her to spend more time with family and pursuing her hobbies and so will be retiring later this year. We will miss Pam very much and would like to wish her well for her future retirement.

Sharon Temple joined the Practice at the beginning of June. Sharon is an Advanced Nurse Practitioner (ANP) who is working closely with the team of Nurses and GPs. Advanced Nurse Practitioners are Registered Nurses who have done extra training and academic qualifications to be able to examine, assess, make diagnoses, treat, prescribe and make referrals for patients who present with undiagnosed or undifferentiated problems. The Triage Nurses, Jackie and Gill will continue to contact patients requiring same day (acute) appointments and signpost or book these patients to the appropriate service, which could be pharmacy, self care or a clinical colleague at the surgery.



Jack West is a Paramedic who is also joining us. He will be starting at the end of July and after orientation at the practice will be working closely with the acute team at the practice helping to signpost, see, treat and visit appropriate patients.

Bhargav Mistry is a Pharmacist who we recruited in June to work with our GPs at the practice on prescribing issues. Working two days a week for our Surgery he will help with arranging medication reviews, medications from hospital and other enquiries from our clinical team.

EXTENDED ACCESS - I.E. APPOINTMENTS IN THE EVENINGS AND WEEKENDS

All surgeries in the area have access to some evening and weekend appointments with GPs, nurses and health care assistants. There are currently centres where this service is offered - The Acorn Surgery in Huntingdon, Cromwell Place Surgery, Buckden Surgery and in March.

The Spinney Surgery has applied to become one of these hubs. Once we have appointments to offer, we will communicate this to our patients.

Appointments at these hubs are for non urgent health problems. GPs who work in the service can be from any practice and a report is sent to the surgery the next day. The nurses and healthcare assistants again see routine issues and carry out procedures such as dressing changes, blood tests, smear tests, blood pressure checks. It is hoped that the skills will be extended over time.

The appointments run from 6.30pm to 8.00pm, in the evening, and 8.30am to 12.30pm on Saturdays and Sundays. If you would like to try one of these appointments, please ask the receptionist when you are calling to make your appointment.

ONLINE ACCESS

We are always looking into ways into how patients can gain better access to practice service and have listened to the feedback about appointment availability and the wait to see their GP.

We encourage patients to use the online appointment booking and prescription ordering facilities offered on our website as well as the NHS app (which can be found on Google Play and the Apple store).

There will soon be more appointments to book online such as smear tests, NHS checks, blood tests and a variety of other appointments. However it is important to remember that if you are selecting these types of appointment that it has been agreed you should be having this procedure. For example, patients cannot book a blood test to check their cholesterol because they are curious to know it, or have a smear test because they aren't sure when their last one was. These appointments are available for those people who have been recalled – for example for a smear test or an NHS check, or your doctor has requested blood tests etc. We will not be able to see patients who book these appointments when they have not been requested or advised. We will keep patients updated when these additional appointment types become available to book online.

DOCTORLINK

And now with the launch of Doctorlink at the practice, checking your symptoms and coming in to see a GP or nurse is easier than ever.

Doctorlink is a free online triage and advice tool which helps our patients see the right member of the practice team in an appropriate time-frame based on your clinical need. At the end of the symptom assessment, you can directly book an appointment to suit your needs and/or receive advice relating to what you should do next.

With this new system, patients will be able save time by reducing unnecessary bookings and calls which in turn will make our services more efficient.

The usual methods of contacting the practice are still in place for those patients who may not be able to use a computer or do not have access to one.

For more information about Doctorlink, please visit our website or ask a member of our reception team. Please also ensure we have an up to date mobile number on our records so you can receive text confirmations for appointment bookings.

ACCESS TO YOUR RECORDS

Through our website you can also request online access to your medical records and by providing our team with a form of photo ID. An application to view your notes will involve a review of your records to ensure they are suitable for release so please allow four weeks for this to be approved. In the mean time, please ensure we have an email address on your record so you can receive your records electronically once approved.

APPOINTMENT ATTENDANCE

A problem all surgeries face is patients who do not attend for their scheduled appointments. In January of this year, the Independent reported that 'missed GP appointments cost the NHS £216m a year' and added 'up to more than **1.2 million GP hours** wasted each year – the equivalent of more than **600 GPs working full-time.**'

In the month of June alone, The Spinney Surgery has had **168 people** not attend their appointments with **61 of these being with a GP, 63 with a nurse and 44 with one of our Healthcare Assistants.** If you repeatedly fail to attend appointments, you may be removed from this practice list and required to find an alternative doctor. If you no longer require your scheduled appointment with either a nurse or doctor for whatever reason, please let us know as soon as possible so we can offer it to someone who does.

WHO IS MY DOCTOR?

This is a question we are asked regularly and we completely understand why!

Most of us like to know that we have a doctor who is “our” doctor – this dates back many years to the start of GP Practices when the founding GPs were the GPs that the patients were registered with. This was often called a “personal list” and was something did at the Spinney which has changed over the years as the dynamics and membership of the Partners and GPs working at the surgery changed.

When GPs change, it can be disconcerting for a patient to find out that their GP is no longer at the surgery when they next consult which could be some months later. It used to be possible to send patients a personal letter when their GP retired but with the volume of changes happening in every GP surgery these days, it is no longer possible to do this. We try to use the newsletter and screens in the surgery to inform patients but we are aware that the message does not always get through. We're sorry that this happens and will continue our efforts to communicate as much as we can when changes happen.

Many surgeries operate something called a “Pooled List”. This is where the patients are registered with the surgery itself rather than a specific doctor. When an appointment is required, the patient requests an appointment with the doctor they usually see, or the doctor they want to see.



Most patients will choose the same doctor for the majority of their ongoing care and if something is more pressing and the GP they prefer is not available they will see another GP or member of the team.

Later in the summer, the Spinney will be adopting the Pooled List method. Patients can still select the doctor they want to see (if they are available) but the official title of “Usual Doctor” will be removed. This should not affect your care in any way other than remove the questions about “who is your doctor” etc.

For example, if you feel that Dr. Culloty is the doctor you always like to see – just request appointments with him when you come in, telephone or book online. Similarly, if Dr Belal is the doctor you want to see, please feel free to book with him. If you don't mind who you see each time (usually better with conditions that are one off rather than long term medical conditions) then you can ask for the next free appointment.

VIRTUAL PATIENT GROUP

You spoke and we listened! In a recent survey put out by the practice, some of our patients let us know that they wanted to know more about our virtual patient group and how they can get involved.

The Spinney Surgery's virtual patient group is for people who want to make their voice heard and put forward their ideas and opinions about how we can improve as a surgery. We will ask the members of this representative group questions such as what you think about our opening times or the quality of the care or service you received & will contact you via email from time to time and occasionally send short surveys to complete. Your ideas and feedback will then go back to the surgery so we can improve our services.

The group is an informal forum for patients who want to be involved in the practice but do not want to regularly commit to meetings. To find out more information about our virtual patient group, please ask our reception team or visit our website where you can submit your details and join the group.

8 THINGS YOU DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT YOUR GP SURGERY

We all need to visit our doctor's surgery from time to time but many people don't realise the ins and outs of how their local practice works and how to get the most out of their services. Our list below features eight handy tips to remember when it comes to both your appointments and care in order to get the most out of both.

1. Your GP would love to give you more time during appointments

There is a fine balance between how many appointments your surgery can offer and the length of these appointments and it's a juggling act for GPs to ensure patients have enough time with them whilst also keeping on time for other patients. Some visits to the GP will require longer than the usual 10 minutes offered so if you think you may need more time with your doctor, let reception know when you book your appointment and they will happily allocate you this time.

2. Lists aren't always helpful

Trying to go through a list of five separate issues you're having in the space of ten minutes can not only lead to appointments running over or patients feeling rushed during their sessions but equally be stressful for your GP. It's best to prioritise what you would like dealt with during your appointment with what is troubling you the most and returning for other ailments if they are still causing problems.

3. Arriving 10 minutes late means you have missed your appointment

If you are late, your allocated time with the doctor has passed and the next patient is due so it's not always as simple as just 'slotting you in'. If you think you will be late for your appointment, we always appreciate you calling to let us know so we can try and get you in to see them at a suitable time. Better yet, if you think you can't make it, letting us know will allow us to offer your time to someone else.

4. Let your doctor know your concerns

As much as we would like them to be, doctors aren't mind-readers and if you're worried about something, speaking up is the best thing. If you think a lump or rash might be something sinister, letting your GP know your concerns up front means they can look into it and give you the reassurance you need.

5. Don't leave your biggest symptom to the end of your appointment

You would be surprised at how many people dedicate the time with their GP to something like a wart on their foot and then mention at the end that they're experiencing a worrying symptom such as blood in their urine or shortness of breath. Make sure you prioritise what you would like dealt with during your appointment

6. It is not always possible to get the right diagnosis first time

Some conditions are not always as obvious as they first seem and GPs are often vilified for not picking up a diagnosis the first time someone visits them in practice. For example, a cough can be caused a multitude of reasons from a simple viral infection to potentially lung cancer. It's unlikely if you visit the GP that you'll immediately be referred for a chest x-ray and you may be asked to see if it settles in a few weeks before returning. During your appointment, ask what you should look out for and under what circumstances you should return for a review.

7. Treat your receptionists with respect

Receptionists get a bad reputation for simply following instructions. They are asked to enquire about your symptoms in order to give you the appropriate clinician or the right amount of time with them, not because they want to talk about you when your back is turned. It's also important to remember that they are told to advise where they feel appropriate and are not medically trained so sometimes can't offer advice such as whether your child should come in if they've bumped their head. In short, remember that your receptionists are under sometimes just as much pressure as your GP and they too should be treated with the same respect.

8. Your GP always wants the best for you

If your GP has decided against referring you or prescribing you with a medication, they aren't trying to make your life difficult or are uncaring. It'll be because they don't feel you need it or have weighed the risks against the benefits. However if you want to go down a certain path and your GP advises against it, it's always best to have an open and honest discussion with them so you can better understand your care.

Our list was inspired by one written by Dr Jon Griffith of Swanlow Surgery, Winsford. To view his **10 Insider GP Tips**, visit www.drjongriffiths.wordpress.com

NEW WEBSITE

The Spinney Surgery website has a new look! Our patients let us know that the practice website looked busy and that it was often difficult to find information they needed.

As a result, we have reviewed and redesigned our website content to make it easier to use and read. Now, you can book appointments, order prescriptions, read through our practice leaflet, make requests for fitness notes, leave us feedback and much more!

If you feel there is anything we can add or change, please let us know. We hope you like the new look!

THE ANNUAL CARERS TEA

As part of National Carer's Week, the Annual Carers Tea was held on Friday 14th June at Needingworth Village Hall as a way to celebrate all that the carers in our community do for those in need. Roughly 50 people attended, most of which were carers and those they care for. The afternoon was a huge success and we thank all those who were involved in organising the event for their hard work up to and on the day.

If you are a carer or know someone who is, and would like more information, support and guidance, please get in touch with us at the surgery or visit our Carers in the Community page on our website.



DON'T LET HAY FEVER RUIN YOUR SUMMER

Did you know you don't need to see your GP for hay fever treatment? Hay fever and seasonal allergy treatments such as tablets, eye drops and nasal sprays are all easily available at low cost from your local pharmacy so there's no need to get a prescription from your GP.

Antihistamines are usually the best treatment for hay fever and should be taken throughout the summer season. Antihistamines can easily be bought from local pharmacies or supermarkets for as little as £2 for a packet of 30 tablets. If a patient goes to their GP to get a prescription then it costs the NHS considerably more.

By going to the pharmacy you'll be saving yourself time and money, freeing up GP appointments for people with more urgent needs as well as doing your bit to help the NHS save money on unnecessary prescription costs. For more information about treating allergies or to find your nearest pharmacy and opening times visit www.nhs.uk

Our top tips to help ease hay fever symptoms:

1. Keep house and car windows closed, especially when the pollen count is high (early morning between 7am to 9am and evenings between 5pm and 7pm)
2. Avoid large grassy areas and cutting the grass
3. Wear wrap-around sunglasses
4. Use petroleum jelly inside your nose to block inhalation of pollen
5. Don't dry wash outside to avoid pollen sticking to your clothes
6. Shower and change your clothes after you've been outside to wash pollen off
7. Vacuum regularly and dust with a damp cloth