

The last days of summer are with us once again!

Actually, we have had quite an exciting time here in the PPG. In response to our decision this year to try and attract more members from our patient community, I'm delighted to report that we have had 6 new members go through the process to join us and we are thrilled to have a really strong group to move forward as we approach the winter with a growing crisis in GP services across the land.

After the British Medical Association (BMA) members who voted overwhelmingly in the spring to take some form of industrial action to get the Government's attention on what is happening, we have been in discussions with the Practice Partners about how BMC might want to respond. Please take a few minutes to read the article further on, it will help you to understand the challenges faced by the NHS in these difficult times.

If you struggle with using the technology for accessing your healthcare needs then do come to the Digital Inclusion Day at the Education Centre (next to Caxton Villa) on **16th October** where the IT department will be available to help you.

Beccles Medical Centre Needs You!



Another member of the 'back room' staff you don't often see is Alison Sampson. She co-ordinates the teaching of Medical Students from UEA, and Paramedics from the University of Suffolk. This has grown from humble beginnings when I, Dr Glenn Collins, first taught 4th year students from the UEA in 2003. The staff now teach all of the 5 years, their entire curriculum. The focus from their first day is how to interact and learn from patients. Invariably the best part of their day is talking to patients with "real" conditions, not textbooks.

Patients are invited by Alison, to see if they will come in to practice and talk to the students. It usually takes approximately 1 hour and remuneration is refreshment! Patients too find it interesting talking with students who may have very up to date medical knowledge. These sessions are usually held in Caxton Villa.

From January 2025 teaching will be expanded to include Cambridge University students, so Beccles Medical Centre will be one of the largest teaching hubs in East Anglia.

Please, if you can spare an hour do come and speak to the students, you will find it engaging. The students often once qualified contact the surgery if they wish to pursue a career in General Practice.

If you feel you can help feel free to contact Alison directly at Caxton Villa or email the surgery on nwicb.becclesmedical@nhs.net



August Statistics

Average phone queue time was 4m 6s.

PATCHs received and processed -over 3844.

11,602 appointments offered—either in person on the phone or by home visit

286 patients did not attend their appointment.

September Statistics

Average phone queue time was 6m 15s

PATCHs received and processed -over 3559

12,825 appointments offered—either in person on the phone or by home visit

315 patients did not attend their appointment.

British Medical Association possible action.

General Practice has long been held to be the NHS gatekeeper for the more specialised services of the District General Hospitals. In the 1980s competition to get a job as a GP was as high as 200 per post. These days a single applicant is more likely, if any at all.. So why has General Practice it lost its appeal? Funding and lifestyle are the answers. This why so many newly qualified doctors flee to Australia and New Zealand. With virtually no applicants for the empty GP posts following retirement the only options are to diversify and employ staff who have different skill sets or hand the surgery keys back to the NHS.

The former is the option chosen by the partners at BMC. To do whatever it can to keep the surgery running, and it is a great challenge to keep heads above water and supply the much-needed services to our patient community.

Funding for GP service has fallen relatively year upon year and from 2022 to 2023 GP partners nationally took an average 17% cut in salary. The workload has increased to what is deemed unsafe levels, accompanied by a surge in seemingly irrelevant electronic paperwork and other administration demands which add hours to the working day. The British Medical Association (BMA) has, by a 98% majority vote,, deemed action must be taken. It has listed ten points of potential action it is recommended are taken by its members.

One of the most contentious for patients is doctors dealing with a maximum of 25 patients a day with 10–15-minute appointments. Others include not doing 'voluntary work' for other agencies and declining to fill masses of irrelevant data in referral forms, instead they suggest a simple letter detailing just the relevant details.

Following consultation with the PPG to hear the patient perspective, BMC's position is that no action will be taken that would have an impact on the safety of patient care. For example, BMC will not be limiting patient contact.

The BMA made their stance clear at the recent election. The GP negotiators are in continuous talks with the new government, if more funding is given to the General Practices, then GP applications and retention might rise and the flow of patients to A&E would lessen. Patient satisfaction would also increase. The cynics may say that the GPs will just give themselves a pay rise, however,, it's important for the Beccles patient community to know that for years the partners salaries at BMC have been capped to pay for additional staff and fair salaries for the rest of the staff.

The Lord Darzi report (2024) has provided impetus for change and the status of the NHS as "broken "at the recent Labour Conference has proven controversial. There has been a very significant switch in funding from General Practice to Hospitals over the last 12 years. The essence of the report says GP services must be expanded to cope with demand from growing numbers of patients with multiple long-term conditions in an increasingly complex, ageing population, It also recommends care closer to home.

In summary medical care has been and still is under funded and we have 16% less GPs in the UK compared with other high income countries relative to the population. More money is needed for General Practice to support an ageing population with more complex needs. That is why The BMA has taken the step of limited industrial action.

Please be assured that Beccles Medical Centre will not take any action that they consider would adversely affect your care. They are seeking to limit their action to only those that are usually unpaid, background demands of other agencies around administration and form filling, which do not directly affect patient care.