

NOVUM HEALTH PARTNERSHIP
BARING ROAD BRANCH PATIENTS' GROUP

Meeting: 17 October 2019
Baring Road Medical Centre: 4.00 p.m.

MINUTES

Present: Lee Walker (chair), Robert Thompson (minute taker), Janet Thompson, Patrick Connolly, Paul Howell (PH), Chris Blake (CB), Mike Gordon, Marsia Stewart (MS: Novum Health Partnership), Jacqueline Christie (Novum Health Partnership), Dr Judy Chen (Novum Health Partnership)

1. Apologies had been received from Jan Gimble, Suzy Wilkinson, Bob Blunden, Pat Blunden and David Williams.
2. The minutes of the last meeting were accepted as an accurate record.
3. Matters arising not covered later in the agenda:

PH reported that he had not had an opportunity to meet Seyhan Yusuf to discuss the issues about IT appointment booking he had intended to raise. For clarification, he outlined two of the PG's particular concerns:

- The unavailability of afternoon appointments before 1.00 p.m., which means that anyone without IT access at the right time cannot book a same-day online appointment. This arrangement was considered less helpful than the previous one, which showed all the day's available appointments at 8.00 a.m.
- The way the system had 'timed out' a patient typing in their explanation why they needed an appointment.

Several related issues arose in the ensuing discussion, including reports of patients receiving inappropriate information about the way to book an appointment or being told there are two- or three-week waits for one.

The general points were addressed by Dr Chen and MS. The practice is trying to manage a very high level of demand in the way fairest to all types of patient, and the appointment booking system is designed with that end in view. The policy of not releasing afternoon appointments until 1.00 p.m. came from Rushey Green, where afternoon appointments had tended to be booked early in the day in preference to morning slots, which remained unused; the intention was to make better use of time and resources.

The Patients' Group felt that sometimes there are problems with the clarity and accuracy of information given by receptionists, at least in the perception of some patients. The group asked whether patients seeking appointments are always told that the practice can offer same-day appointments and telephone triage when necessary, and whether these options are presented to patients in a clear and accessible way. It was accepted that more consistency is needed in this area; a reception supervisor will be on duty at BRMC every day to help raise standards.

4. Surgery report

MS reported on recent staff changes and new appointments.

September DNAs were 119 at Baring Road and 257 at Rushey Green, both relatively satisfactory compared to earlier figures. Flu clinics have been well attended; the practice will try to find a way of allowing those who have positively decided not to have the flu vaccination to opt out of repetitive text reminders.

5. Special topics for discussion led by Dr Chen

a) Recent GP survey

Dr Chen pointed out that, in terms of overall satisfaction, Novum is only slightly below the CCG and national averages; patient responses to the survey are optional and the uptake is low, so although the practice takes the survey seriously, it should not be regarded as a uniquely significant measure of performance.

The group accepted this point, noting that responses to many questions are highly subjective; for example, patients' good relationship with an individual doctor may well be the reason for the higher scores given to small practices. It was also noted that results take no account of the relative age and circumstances of each practice's patients.

Other measures used by Novum include the practice's Friends and Family test. Responses to this survey usually number between 350 and 500 a month, and over the last twelve months the number who would recommend the practice has varied between 83% and 86%. There was some discussion of the effectiveness of surveys generally, one observation being that the length and detail of large-scale surveys tend to discourage responses, particularly from satisfied patients.

The group was pleased to note that satisfaction with our receptionists is above the national average.

c) Promoting Novum Health Partnership and d) Patient understanding of the website

These two topics were taken next as a development of the previous topic.

The Patients' Group agreed that NHS practices need and deserve patient feedback; feedback should be constructively critical where necessary, but positive reinforcement is also important for staff morale in difficult and often exposed circumstances. Patients' Groups are well placed to take a lead in providing and encouraging useful responses and in motivating patients to play an active role in supporting their GP practices, the continued availability of which cannot be taken for granted.

There was a general feeling that, in addition to the Family and Friends test, a simple tick-box feedback form might be helpful. The group also agreed with Dr Chen that an online forum would help to engage working-age people, particularly those with young families, and that we would wish to support this initiative.

It was felt that information about the Patients' Group could be more prominently displayed around the waiting room, including on the electronic screen, and on the PG table. Seyhan is working on a new practice leaflet, which should also contain information about the group. Other suggestions included the possibility of an 'Open Meeting' to which patients on the

practice list are invited (in fact every PG meeting is 'open', but this would be a special event), and a meeting on a weekend afternoon.

It was agreed that much of our information, whether about the Patients' Group or the practice generally, tends to require the patient to make an active effort to find it. The web site in particular does not seem to have the impact it should, and patients need to be more aware of its possibilities, for example, the facility of forwarding individual enquiries to a GP. The receptionists have a tablet they can use to demonstrate the website and other online services to patients.

The group was generally very supportive of these suggestions, though we think that the website is less user-friendly than it could be. More generally, we accepted that patient access is the practice's main priority but pointed out a mismatch between the practice's intentions and patient awareness of what is on offer. Ways in which the Patients' Group might be able to support the practice in communicating and engaging with patients will be explored in detail at later meetings; the agenda for the next one will address this item after the scheduled presentation and discussion on Type 2 Diabetes.

b) Clinical Quality discussions

The group welcomed Dr Chen's request for a patient perspective on clinical quality issues, as well as her suggestion that practice staff should take part in or lead these discussions at future meetings.

7. Dates of future meetings were noted:

28th November 2019

9th January 2020 (AGM)

20th February 2020

2nd April 2020

The speaker on 28th November will be Nina Pearson, Diabetes Project Manager from the South London Health Innovation Network. Dr Chen said she would like to follow the speaker by giving the practice's perspective on the Diabetes services it offers, and the group welcomed this proposal.

8. AoB

a) CB asked why nurse appointments cannot be booked online. The reason is that there is often a lack of understanding of what is available, leading to wasted time for both patients and staff.

b) It was noted that the waiting room seating is rather shabby and that the room can become overcrowded with prams and pushchairs, which cause particular problems in wet weather. Dr Chen replied that some more safety-critical maintenance tasks have already been undertaken; no obvious solution to the 'buggy park' problem appears to be available.

The meeting was declared closed at 5.35 p.m.