Dear all.

You may know that Herefordshire general practices have all agreed to partake in the **BMA GP collective action**(NOT a strike). This is a result of increased workload and continued under-funding of general practice services, on top of a shift of work from secondary to primary care (what we call ‘left-shift’, in case you come across the term).

This is with year on year funding for patient care well below inflation.

The increase in workload to GPs is often invisible to patients. Since COVID, hospital doctors – or their non-prescribing team members such as specialist nurses- often have telephone appointments with patients instead of face to face consultations. Often, therefore, if they decide to start a new medication, they increasingly write to the GP to prescribe it (previously they will have issued a prescription themselves). This means the GP needs make sure it is appropriate, ensure the patient has been counselled about side effects AND make sure no interactions with current medications. On issuing the prescription the GP will now take ALL the legal responsibility for this medication. This often takes 5-15 minutes per patient, and sometimes has to be stalled until we have been able to speak to the patient to confirm all the above.

Similarly, we now take many of the hospital blood tests. We have to view and act on the results (whereas previously the bloods would have been taken in hospital outpatients and results gone straight to specialist).

Scale up even these two scenarios (which happen several times a day) and you can see the tip of the problem we face.

There is also, thankfully, a huge amount more we can do, and prescribe, for patients than even ten years ago. But this all takes time. My GP trainer (many years ago) used to tell me of how when he first started practising he could only prescribe two effective things to patients: diuretics or antibiotics. Patients were even admitted to hospital to be started on ramipril! (which many of you will be on). Now we have a HUGE pharmacopeia at our fingertips, but this makes the medicine more complex, more risky, and yet less well funded. No wonder we are struggling.

The BMA put it like this:

*England general practice currently receives 6p in every NHS pound, and an average GMS ‘global sum’ per registered patient of £107.57 per annum. CPI erosion to the GMS contract since 2018/19 is worth £659 million – 6.6%. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that over 1,300 practices have either closed or merged in the past decade.*

So as a result of all this**, GP** **practices across Herefordshire and the country are participating in collective action**, in dispute with NHS England over the- previously imposed- contract changes. We in Kingstone are still debating how we can engage in this with minimum disruption to you, our patients (who are also our relations, friends and neighbours). Most surgeries are implementing ‘safe working guidance’ as set out by the BMA- meaning once GPs have reached their maximum daily capacity of 25 patient appointments each, all urgent queries will then be directed to NHS 111. Currently we in Kingstone only do this when we are really overstretched in a day, usually when calls come through late.

Finally, we thank you all for your support. Many of you have asked how you can help. Often this is as simple as being kind to us when we are running late in clinic, and kind to our admin team when they are trying to do their best for you. If you want more concrete steps please make sure:

1. You write to your MP about GP funding (easily done online)
2. You talk to those who are frustrated by the BMA campaign and put forward our position
3. You make sure all your household members are registered with us (not just the ones who regularly use our services- this is because of how the funding model works. Healthy patients cross-fund the unwell).
4. Use our dispensary services, not the pharmacies in town or online pharmacies. We are lucky to have this in Kingstone and it cross-funds our clinical service.

We are really touched that the **Kingstone Surgery Charitable Trust** have also leapt into action to help fund a dispensing collection machine. This is not something that is directly funded by the NHS, but will make those of you who are working have much greater flexibility when collecting medication- being able to do so 24 hours a day. I wish my own surgery had one!

We hope to see many of you at their November quiz night. Let’s hope the surgery team gets the medical questions right……

BW as always,

Dr Teshk Nakshbandi and Dr Rosie Wellesley