



Patient Group

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PATIENT GROUP BULLETIN, APRIL 2023

ACCURX NHS – THE BEST WAY TO CONTACT THE SURGERY

BPS along with other GP practices in Wandsworth introduced a new way to get in touch with the Surgery for both medical and admin purposes (including non-urgent bookings with clinicians other than GPs) without having to telephone the Surgery. Accurx NHS is an online triaging, and messaging system which replaces Dr Link and offers more services. The Patient Group has been monitoring its use and finds it to be quick and reliable – answers may be sometimes received as soon as within the hour but certainly within two days. The GPs' verdict is that it is "Wonderful." The Patient Group was disappointed to find the system was switched off when the Surgery is closed, but due to our feedback this has now been adjusted and the admin messaging section is now available at all times. The medical section is limited to core working hours to avoid any risk of important messages being missed. You can find Accurx NHS on the BPS website [here](#) and on the NHS App [here](#) but not on the My GP App. It really is very easy to use and saves a lot of frustration. If however you have problems using it, phone the Surgery and use option 6. The Patient Group is keen to monitor this new system and asks patients to email us with any issues. It's obviously not suitable for everyone (including those who do not use online services) but by using it you will free up the telephone lines for others and for emergencies.

The BMA and the Government are in talks about a new proposed requirement to try to get all patients seen within 2 weeks. While this is Good News this requirement will present a challenge for the Practice and we must expect some teething problems. The practice is still trying to recruit GPs and Nurses with very limited success.

NEW WAY OF DISTRIBUTING THE BULLETIN

The Patient Group produces this Bulletin about three times a year. Distribution by email has been problematic, so starting now a text message will be sent to all patients with a link enabling you to access the Bulletin on the Surgery's website. Paper copies are available at the Surgery.

RED NOSE DAY

Many of our tireless staff took to spinning to raise money for Red Nose Day. They raised over £500 which is a terrific achievement. We send them our heartfelt congratulations.



BLOOD PRESSURE MONITORING

High blood pressure (or "hypertension") increases your risk of strokes and heart attacks and regular monitoring is therefore very important. The Surgery now has some blood pressure monitors that you can borrow to check your blood pressure in a relaxed and comfortable setting at home. Ask at the reception desk if a device is available or simply check in at the monitor in the hallway. Our Care Navigators follow a protocol which guides them for the next steps with your blood pressure reading. As a general rule, the Blood Pressure should be below 150/90.

MEET YOUR PRACTICE TEAM

The general practice workforce is being expanded to ease pressures on GPs and make it easier for patients to get an appointment when they need one. As well as GPs and practice nurses, practice teams are increasingly likely to include a range of healthcare professionals. These additional roles are part of the much needed transformation of primary care to improve access and quality for patients. This isn't about restricting access to doctors, but making best use of the other people within practice teams, like nurses and clinical pharmacists, who are often better placed to give advice and support. This then frees up GPs to see more complex and sicker patients who really need them.

Below we feature just some of the roles within your general practice team, who are here to help you.

Care Navigators (who used to be called Receptionists)

Care Navigators are GP practice staff who have been given specialist training to help them direct patients to the right health professional first time. They can help you by:

- booking appointments with the right healthcare professionals.
- identifying services you can access with a referral.
- making appointments for new care or services you might not be aware of.

Physician Associates

Physician Associate (PA) is a new healthcare role that is starting to be introduced to general practice. Whereas practice nurses traditionally specialise, Physician Associates are generalists: medically-trained across a wide range of conditions. This means they can diagnose and treat children and adults with a range of clinical problems.

Advanced Nurse Practitioners

Advanced Nurse Practitioners can make decisions based on assessment, diagnosis and interpretation of test results without consulting a GP. ANPs are able to independently prescribe appropriate medication, evaluate or refer to other specialists if necessary. How can an Advanced Nurse Practitioner help you?

- diagnosing and treating minor illnesses.
- prescribing medication.
- giving advice and information about your health.

Clinical Pharmacists

Pharmacists make a difference to the lives of their patients through an expert knowledge of medicines and health. They help patients with conditions such as hypertension, asthma and diabetes to manage their medications and can help any patient review their medication. You can book an appointment directly with the Pharmacist via the Care Navigators. Pharmacists can help you by:

- giving advice and information about your health and minor ailments.
- Supporting you to manage and get the best from your repeat prescriptions.
- supporting you to manage your long term conditions.



Social Prescribers (Special feature in next issue)

Social prescribers connect people with local community activities and services that can help improve their health and wellbeing. A vital part of their role is to build relationships with the people they are helping by listening carefully to what's important to them and what motivates them. Again, you can book an appointment with our Social Prescriber via the Care Navigators. Social Prescribers can help by:

- offering support with issues that are affecting your health and wellbeing.
- providing advice and support on social issues.
- linking you into local services, groups and activities.

Physiotherapists

Physiotherapists focus on identifying and maximising movement to improve the health and wellbeing of patients. They'll work with people on a daily basis, recommending exercises and using high-tech ultrasound equipment or even hydrotherapy pools, depending on the patients' needs. Once a patient's movement problem has been diagnosed, they'll work with them to determine a treatment plan. They'll also promote good health and advise people on how to avoid injury. They can help you by:

- diagnosing and treating muscular and joint conditions.
- advising on how to manage your condition.
- referring you to specialist services.

EDUCATION TALK – WELLBEING

One of the most valuable functions of the BPSPG is the organising of regular Education Talks where patients can come and hear about important health topics in talks by experts, often our own GPs. For our first talk since Covid, Dr Laura Seymour (who as well as being a GP holds a Diploma of Lifestyle Medicine) gave us 'A Doctor's Advice for Healthy Living'. For the first time, we made the talk available on Zoom as well as in person at the Practice. The talk was not as well attended as the Patient Group would have wished but we remain committed to holding talks and will be looking for speakers who have general appeal.

Lifestyle medicine is a move away from the traditional disease-centred approach, focusing on the causes of chronic ill-health; it aims instead to help people take steps to avoid preventable diseases. Dr Seymour explained that this approach focuses on six key 'pillars':

1. increasing physical activity
2. healthy eating
3. restorative sleep
4. managing stress
5. nurturing meaningful relationships and social interactions
6. avoiding toxins such as tobacco, alcohol and drugs.

None of this is about being judgmental and making people feel ashamed of their lifestyle choices, or about rejecting helpful pharmaceuticals. Instead, the focus is on helping patients to take small steps that lead to beneficial habits, which eventually add up to a more healthy way of life.

Dr Seymour encouraged all attendees to set a goal as a first step. She suggested that these goals should be SMART – specific (for example, I'll eat a portion of fruit or vegetables with every meal); measurable (I'll keep track of how many portions I eat each day); achievable (I can easily add some fruit to breakfast); realistic (I won't aim to eat twelve portions just yet); and time-bound (I'll do this for March and then see how I feel).



SPOTLIGHT ON THE SURGERY (CLINICAL) PHARMACIST

As part of our series highlighting the work of staff other than GPs, Romy Kalsi, our Pharmacist, answers questions put to him by the Patient Group:

1. What are your main responsibilities?

To oversee the safe and efficient running of the prescribing team; to advise on hypertension for the Practice's patients; to handle queries from the Practice Doctors and the local multi-disciplinary team (MDT) including community pharmacist colleagues; to ensure patients discharged from hospital have the correct medications and are familiar with what they are and what they do, and how to take them. I check patients' medications to ensure the medications we prescribe are within local policy guidelines and act on any medication recalls or issues the NHS may highlight. I also look at the regimes of patients who have multiple medications. This is to ensure they are safe, and ensure they are safe when taken together. This often results in stopping medications that are not needed or not working well. And lots more besides.....

2. How does your work benefit patients?

The primary benefit is to ensure patients receive the care and medication that they need at the appropriate time and to ensure the safety of the advice and prescribing.

3. Can patients contact you directly about their medications generally (obviously not regarding repeat prescriptions)?

Yes, I am available at the surgery via the reception, though I'd encourage patients to contact their local pharmacist first. If needed, the pharmacist can escalate any query with me.

4. What are your top tips for getting the most from our medications?

The single most valuable tip is to make sure you take your medication as prescribed, at the times prescribed, and for the length of treatment prescribed. If you are not taking your medication, or experience side effects, then please tell your Doctor.



RELAUNCH OF THE FRIEND AND FAMILY TEST

Giving feedback has just been made much easier. Unfortunately, NHS England has decided to stick with this silly name but the new forms are clear and to the point. Starting now, patients will receive a text asking for comments after every appointment. (You can, if you prefer pick up a form at reception.) You will be asked to rate the service and to highlight what was good and what could be improved. This is a direct way of raising issues with the Practice and the Patient Group will be involved in analysing the results.

Q & A SECTION – PATIENT GROUP QUESTIONS ANSWERED BY BPS STAFF

Q I have a problem with logging on to My GP App - what should I do ?

A Call The Surgery and select Option 6 for the IT department; they will help with all access issues.

Q. I have a question about medication and I don't want to wait for a doctor's appointment.

A .Call reception and ask for a call with the Surgery Pharmacist. Our pharmacist can advise and prescribe – Dr Macmichael says in many cases the pharmacist knows more than the doctors about drugs and their effects.

Q My husband was discharged from St Georges and arrangements for the follow-up care were not clear.

A. We looked in to this and found that the care plan that was set up did not get going immediately. We pride ourselves on good follow-up care and we will do everything we can to ensure a caring and efficient transition. Contact us for help if needed.

We are here to represent you and we look forward to hearing from you. Do get in touch with your comments on this Bulletin, with suggestions for improvements to health care and requests for information about the Patient Group by emailing us at bpspatientgroup@gmail.com

Note Anyone can attend PG meetings on the second Thursday of the month at 6pm via Zoom by making use of the recurring link [here](#). You would be very welcome.