

Patient Participation Group Meeting

7.11.22 @ 7.30pm

Attendees:

Robin Pullen, PMG (RDP)
Helen Hargitay, PMG (HH)
Ray Shields
Mike Watts
Tony Peacey
Lance Allen

Vicky Baillie
Gemma Reed

Apologies: Penny Greenwood, Practice Manager

Minutes of Previous Meeting

RDP went through minutes from previous meeting on 28th February 22. There were no matters arising.

Staff Changes

RDP summarised the staff changes that have taken place in the practice recently:

- Kath Payne has now left and Penny Greenwood has taken her place as practice manager
- Dr Nick Timmis and Dr Emily Lake are relocating to New Zealand and will be leaving the practice at the end of November
- Dr Zurianah Karim is now a partner
- We have two new practice nurses, Laura James, who is a trained diabetes nurse, and Victoria Bate who is working in the treatment room
- Two new phlebotomists have also joined the practice
- Denise Murphy has trained as a sexual health nurse and can now fit coils and implants thereby taking some pressure from the doctors.

RDP outlined the difficulties in recruiting staff, particularly GPs and Advanced Nurse Practitioners (ANPs) and explained that locum doctors will temporarily fill the gaps, some of whom we hope will join the practice.

Appointments

One of the attendees had asked for information on numbers of GP appointments available each day at the practice. RDP explained that this differs every day depending on who is in, on leave or off sick. On average, the practice offers the following:

Monday 129, Tuesday 140, Weds 125, Thurs 129, Friday 127 appointments. In addition, trainees can offer between 12 and 18 appointments each.

There is generally more demand on a Monday and Friday, therefore we have more GPs available. In addition, there are at least two GPs on urgent surgery/home visits each day. Between them the urgent team can have 50-90 patient contacts.

RDP gave details of the other work undertaken by GPs daily including tasks, reviewing results, analysing incoming documents, prescribing repeat and urgent medications, making referrals as well as covering all the above for at least one other GP daily.

The British Medical Association (BMA) recommends GPs undertake no more than 30 appointments each day.

The urgent surgery is a perpetual challenge at between 50 and 90 appointments daily and has become an overflow rather than urgent surgery.

Impact of Covid19

Ray Shields asked what the impact of Covid19 had been. RDP answered that in general terms since he started in medicine, problems had become much more complex, requiring much more time. Most appointments are allocated 10 mins when, in reality, they often take 15 mins or longer. Things that were once the preserve of hospital is now routinely managed in General Practice e.g., heart and kidney failure. There are many more mental health issues to deal with as well as an upsurge in issues that have become more complex such as HRT. More drugs are available for each problem and most issues now require a blood test. In addition to this primary care is conducting many tasks that used to be done by hospitals and the media directs everyone to their GP. There is no doubt that everyone agrees capacity needs to be expanded.

GR asked about the perception that the practice had been “unavailable” during Covid19. RDP responded that the practice had been open the whole time and during 2020 was also open for bank holidays. The practice has been particularly hard hit by staff contracting Covid19 this year but still managed to remain open; some practices in the area have had to close when hit by staff shortages. RDP expressed that he was enormously proud of the team at PMG but recognised that all staff are utterly exhausted.

There was a question about the availability of advance appointments and HH clarified how the appointment system works. Most appointments are released every morning at 8am for that day. They are available to book over the phone, in person at the front desk and some are released on-line. In addition, each day appointments are released on a rolling basis for booking 2 weeks in advance. We also have the new eConsult appointments - available via the PMG website - which are another way of booking an advance appointment.

There was a question about reception staff training and retention. HH explained that the reception team had also been hard hit by Covid absences and has some vacancies at present. The team has a small proportion of relatively inexperienced staff members; each receptionist undergoes a 3-month training process, and this has also been hampered by staff sickness.

RDP explained the recent problems of local pharmacies and the impact this had also had on the surgery in terms of workload for both GPs, practice pharmacists and the reception team.

He discussed the prospect of the practice bringing in new staff in the future who will be tasked with looking at processes to help ease GP workload and free up more capacity.

Self-Referral

RDP outlined the opportunities for self-referral for patients of the practice. These include:

- First Contact Physios who come to practice every Wednesday who assess patients and refer to community physios where necessary
- Vitamins – who offer counselling, CBT, anger management in a tiered system.
- Stop Smoking – help available from community pharmacists
- Tier 1 weight management
- Social prescribing – signposting other resources available in the community. Receptionists can do this for patients
- Hearing tests/eye tests – available from local opticians
- Referrals to local pharmacists – reception can refer patients with minor illnesses/ailments to community pharmacists for advice

Complaints

RDP went through the complaints received and dealt with by the practice since the PPG meeting in January. These have all been responded to and are discussed in the monthly GP meetings. None have been referred further.

Challenges ahead

RDP summarized these as:

- Access to GPs
- Staff recruitment and retention
- Patient access to records coming at the end of Nov 22
- Implementation of change within the practice and new roles going forward

The future of the PPG

RDP asked the group to think about how the PPG can help the practice going forward and whether it is worth looking at a 're-boot'. It was suggested that members look at other models and whether it could run itself and broaden its base to include a younger element. Members to bring ideas to the next meeting.

Any other Business

There was a suggestion of looking at editorial in "Your Reach" magazine (Reach Local) although RDP did not feel that the practice needed any advertising as such at the moment.

Ray Shields mentioned that the Portishead Porters are celebrating 30 years of service in March 2023 and extended an invitation to the practice to take part in those celebrations.

Next Meeting

Suggested for the early 2023, on a Weds or Thursday, so that Practice Manager Penny Greenwood can attend.