



Regal Chambers Patients' Newsletter

Issue 14: December 2020

About the Patient Participation Group (PPG)

The Patient Participation Group (PPG) is a forum of volunteers who represent patients' views to the Practice team, and through this help to improve the services offered.

Covid Secure Premises

The practice was visited by the Clinical Commissioning Group's Infection Control Team on 29th October 2020. The visit was to see how we are working to protect both staff and patients in the current climate. We were required to demonstrate that we could meet key lines of enquiry including that:

- we have implemented measures and changes to make the workplace safe and reduce risk,
- we have in place an up to date Business Continuity Plan,
- infection risk is assessed via telephone triage in the first instance,
- patients and staff are protected with PPE,
- infection control guidance is regularly checked and updated,
- Standard Operating Procedures are in place for shielded and suspected Covid patients ("hot") – this includes a clear segregation within the practice to reduce transmission,
- we are protecting at risk staff and following procedures for staff with suspected symptoms,
- there is clear signage and prompts for patients to remind patients of social distancing,
- waiting areas are organised to promote social distancing,
- we have a record of cleaning that is undertaken each day.

We are delighted that this risk assessment concluded that we are operating in a Covid-secure way. We have received a certificate; copies of which are displayed in the practice and on our website.

We understand that some measures that have been implemented may be frustrating at times for patients. However, this new way of working has helped us to ensure that we are working in a safe way and we appreciate your ongoing support.

E-Consultation

We have been working with a project team to promote e-consultation in an attempt to increase usage. This seems to have had a positive impact, as the number of e-consults that we are receiving on a weekly basis has almost doubled. At the start of October we were receiving roughly 55 e-consults per week; we are now receiving almost 100. Patient feedback has been overwhelmingly positive with 90% reporting that they were satisfied with the outcome and 86% recommending this.

E-consultations are an effective way to seek advice from the practice and avoids patients' having to wait on the phone to speak to a receptionist. General clinical advice can be sought along with requests for prescriptions, sick notes, insurance reports etc. E-consults are responded to within two working days. There is the functionality for the patient to attach a photograph i.e. of a rash, a mole etc which is extremely helpful for the triaging clinician.

Please visit our website for more information <https://regalchambers.webgp.com/> or try this the next time you need to contact the practice.

Flu Vaccination

Demand for the flu vaccination has been incredibly high this year and we are delighted that we have exceeded uptake against targets compared to last year. We had to arrange flu clinics in a very different way with booked appointments to ensure that we could maintain social distancing. We received lots of positive feedback from patients including:

- Very efficient flu jab clinic appointment.
- Everything was well organised and I felt safe.
- Very good & quick – no hanging around!
- Just excellent, very quick.
- Quick, efficient and safely managed flu jab.
- Well organised and quick service.
- The vaccination team were absolutely brilliant. Ran like a well-oiled machine. Friendly and efficient.
- Fast, efficient, personable – also acceptable distances from other people.
- Well thought out one-way system making for a quick and painless experience

We are doing one final push to invite patients who are eligible but not yet responded (over 65-year olds and those 18-64 with a long term condition). As per recent government advice we will then invite those patients aged 50-64. An additional flu clinic has been arranged for Saturday 12 December.

Covid-19 Vaccination

You will have seen media reports that a Covid-19 vaccination has been approved for use in the UK. We are working with the other practices in Hitchin and Whitwell to develop a plan to deliver the vaccine and will be in touch with patients about this as soon as there is clearer information. We ask that patients do not contact the surgery about this.

GP Capacity Report

The Local Medical Committee has undertaken a piece of work with practices in Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire to try and understand and quantify the additional workload that GPs have undertaken as a result of Covid-19. This was undertaken in response to misconstrued and untrue media reports that general practice has not been open since the start of the pandemic. Practices were asked to compare a week in September 2020 with a week in September 2019. Findings at a glance include:

- There have been 6,906 more consultations delivered in September 2020 compared to the previous year. This represents a 10% increase in the number of consultations.
- 100% of practices have been providing face to face appointments.
- GP time spent delivering indirect patient care has increased by 130%.
- The combination of Covid restrictions, increase in indirect patient care and work passed from acute trusts resulted in a 56% increase in the GP time required to deliver services.

Although we are operating in a different way, we would like to reassure our patients that we are open and have been since the start of the pandemic. All patients requesting an appointment will be triaged by telephone initially, however, if a face-to-face appointment is deemed necessary by the clinician, then this will be arranged.

28 Day Prescribing and Electronic Repeat Dispensing

In line with recommended guidance from NHS England and East & North Herts Commissioning Group, we are changing patient prescriptions where appropriate to 28 days. This is in response to multiple issues including the current pandemic and Brexit and is part of preparations to prioritise work and protect both patients and the medication supply chain.

Where appropriate, patients may also be switched over to electronic repeat dispensing. This enables prescriptions to be sent through to the pharmacy automatically without the patient or pharmacy having to request this on a monthly basis. If there are implications with regard to increased prescription costs, patients can apply for an NHS prescription pre-payment certificate <https://services.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/buy-prescription-prepayment-certificate/start>.

Staff News

We said goodbye to two receptionists earlier in the year; Jacqueline Lunness and Hilary Cherrill. Our new receptionists are Mira Tatarova, Linda Fountain, Savita Patel and Natalia Allen. As you can see, we have a very new reception team and we would appreciate your patience whilst they are undergoing a period of training.

We have a new trainee GP joining the practice from 2 December 2020; Dr Sadete Moore. Dr Moore is likely to be training at the practice until April 2022.

Dr Padita Mehta and Dr Louise Randall are both expecting babies in February 2020 and will be taking a period of maternity leave. Dr Fatima Tahir, Dr Valentine Goulstine and Dr Bolanle Akin-Agunibade who all have experience of working in the practice, will be providing maternity locum cover.

PPG Meeting

Due to Covid, we have not had the opportunity to meet with the patient group. A virtual PPG meeting will be arranged in the new year; I will be in touch with details.