

Patient News

Spring 2008

Planning Future Development

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What does the Future Hold?

- Additional services available at the Medical Centre.
- New challenges ahead.
- Thinking about the next generation.
- Expanding services in Market Harborough.

The prospect of your family doctors being replaced by an impersonal, walk-in polyclinic is not something most people relish, or having your check-up as this week's loss leader at the local supermarket. However, these nightmare scenarios have a grain of sense in them. More medical care being provided in local Primary Care premises rather than in distant hospitals is desirable and accessibility is something we all value as our lives get busier. The danger is that size can lead to an impersonal service; convenient access may be gained by sacrificing continuity of care.

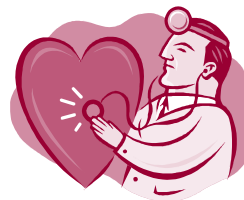
Striking a Balance

At Market Harborough Medical Centre we have to strike the right balance. Our patients will benefit from an increasing number of services provided within the centre, but it is imperative that we maintain the personal, long lasting relationship between each doctor and his/her own patients. Familiarity with our patients, their medical and life histories, their work, their family circumstances, problems, beliefs and ambitions, is central to the holistic medicine we aspire to.

Already, we have undertaken major increases in the

monitoring of our patients who have chronic diseases. This has paid large dividends in improved health, but put a strain on our accessibility, for although the practice population remained fairly steady, the amount of work undertaken for those patients has increased significantly. We were aware that for a while our patients did suffer difficulty getting to see their doctor when they wanted. By employing highly trained nurses to carry out routine monitoring, we have released our doctors to be available again to solve problems.

Reception staff now ask



Your care is in our hands

patients for information about the reason for their request for a GP appointment. While there is no compulsion to tell them if it is very private, knowing a little of each caller's requirements enables receptionists to direct patients to the most appropriate service; it may be that they only need telephone advice, need to be seen urgently,

or need the minor illness or chronic disease clinic. This leaves the GP more available to see their own patients who need them. A significant increase in appointments are now available and accessibility is improving rapidly.

Improved Medical Care

However, even as we solve one problem, other developments will create new challenges. We are providing and hope to provide more services from our premises that were previously available only by travelling to hospitals in Leicester or Kettering; specialist dermatology, rheumatology, diabetology, orthopaedics and ophthalmology are now available on site. Echocardiography is now being piloted on the premises and we are in negotiation with LCR PCT to expand our services in other areas. We are collaborating in pilot projects to screen targeted age groups for prostate cancer, gastrointestinal cancer and young people between 15-24 for chlamydial infection. In addition we are currently undertaking retinal screening for diabetics and aortic aneurysm screening.

An important project is a scheme, awaiting PCT approval, to take back provision of Out of Hours

service from 8am to 11pm and at weekends, while also hosting the Minor Injuries Unit currently housed in the Cottage Hospital.

Size Matters

These developments will create great advantages for our patients' convenience and the standard of care they receive. As we are a large partnership, we should be able to undertake more of our own patient services in-house. However, the increase in work and services may ultimately mean we have to move into larger premises with better car parking facilities. Though we may grow in size, we must not lose the personal family practice that we have provided in the town for generations.

Our registration system, while not inflexible, is ideal to ensure that patients get to see the doctor who knows and respects them as people as well as understanding their medical conditions. Knowing and trusting one another over a period of time, means that doctor and patient will be better placed to develop a long term strategy for overall health improvement and life enhancement.

Balancing the Budget

Although NHS treatment is free to the patient, all care, whether in hospital or in the community, has to be paid for. Each PCT has a strictly limited budget for patients in their area and each GP has an allocated budget to pay for the investigation, surgery, medicines, treatments and care for his/her patients.

It is possible to practice medicine efficiently, using medicines and therapies

that are proven as effective, but less expensive, than the most costly. By treating more patients ourselves, rather than referring on to others to treat, money can be saved on this budget.

Any savings made from a Practice's budget are permitted to be reinvested into funding further services for patients. We are committed to spending all of our savings to expanding services in Market Harborough. If approved by the PCT we hope to use part of our savings for extra staff to man an Out of Hours service.



It's all a balancing act

A Legacy to the next Generation

High quality medical practice owes a duty of care to the next as well as the current generation. Market Harborough Medical Centre has been a teaching practice for almost thirty years. Last month we were inspected and re-approved to be a teaching centre for young doctors for a further three years. Three partners are approved as trainers and another is currently



Approved teaching centre

training to become a trainer. We also teach undergraduate medical students from Leicester Medical School all year round. One of our partners has recently been appointed Chairman of the Leicester Faculty of the Royal College of General Practitioners.

While teaching is a stimulating duty, it repays us by keeping us up-to-date and constantly challenging us in ways that benefit us and our patients.

Our Community Hospital

The Partnership has won the contract to provide medical care to St Luke's Hospital, for both the new stroke unit and the community beds. We are actively involved in negotiation with the PCT over the planning and future redevelopment of hospital facilities on the St Luke's site. Two partners are involved on the Hospital Board for the new St Luke's Hospital in developing local Community Hospital facilities. There have been meetings with Harborough District Council who have been very supportive.

Facing the Future

All in all, there is a lot happening, and a lot more being planned for a better health service for the future. Nothing ever stands still in medicine, there are always fresh challenges, but we are really fortunate in the team of staff we have at present, so we should rise to whatever fate the Government can throw at us.

Dr. A.P. Bennett & Partners

“High quality medical practice owes a duty of care to the next as well as the current generation”

