



## Practice Newsletter , Nov 08-Jan 09

### Dr Jeffcoate

Dr Jeffcoate will be leaving the practice towards the end of the year. She stated, "It is with regret that I announce that I am leaving the practice in December, after nearly 12 years. This is due to the steadily increasing workload and working hours. I would like to thank all the patients who have made me feel part of their lives over the years, and wish you all good health in the future".

We know that she will be greatly missed by many and wish her all the best. We hope to recruit a new doctor to take her place, in the coming months.

### Improving Access to Psychological Therapies

We are hoping to have one or two of the new Cognitive Behavioural Therapists working from our newly extended premises in the future. Access to "talking therapies", for conditions such as depression and anxiety, is limited, with long waiting lists, such as to see one of our Practice Counsellors.

The Government has decided to invest in widening access to such therapies, both through Computer-Based Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CCBT) and telephone-based and/or face-to-face treatment. Presently, we can guide you to the "Mood Gym" programme that is open to all with Internet access, or the "Beating the Blues" programme, which requires referral from your GP and is accessed at a number of sites throughout Sheffield. These options will usually be discussed with you when making treatment plans, when your Dr thinks they are appropriate, but please do ask if you feel you would prefer this form of treatment. Once we know more about the plans for the new practitioners, we will let you know.

### Extended hours

We have now commenced our later evening surgeries on Mondays, Wednesdays and one Saturday per month. We hope that this will prove popular. Just a reminder that these appointments are pre-bookable only, and not drop-in, or for emergencies. Such patients will be directed to our Out Of Hours provider, which at present is the GP Collaborative, based at the Royal Hallamshire Hospital, although they plan to move to the Northern General Hospital in the next 3 months.

### Clinical Corner- By Dr Lucy Hickman

Over the next few weeks we hope to commence blood testing in the surgery to monitor DMARDS. That stands for Disease Modifying Anti-Rheumatic Drugs. These are prescribed for patients who suffer with various diseases including Rheumatoid Arthritis. These are drugs that ease symptoms but also reduce the damaging effect of the disease on the joints. They work by blocking the way

inflammation develops in the joints. They include: sulphasalazine, methotrexate and leflunomide. It is these drugs that have improved the outlook i.e. prognosis in recent years for patients with RA.

It is usual to start a DMARD as soon as possible after RA has been diagnosed. This is to try and limit the disease process as much as possible. In general, the earlier you start them, the more effective it is likely to be.

It can take several weeks/months before you notice any effects. Each DMARD has different possible side-effects. If one does not suit, a different one may be used instead. Side effects can be serious including damage to the liver and blood producing cells. They are rare but as a result patients are required to have regular blood tests to monitor for these side effects.

Patients are still required to attend hospital outpatients to be reviewed clinically by the consultant but if they feel that the patient and disease is stable the blood test monitoring will be handed over to us as GP's. This saves the patient a further trip to the hospital.

Joanne, our health care assistant will take the blood and then hand the result to the doctor on call to review before informing the patient of the result and any changes that may be required. If there are any significant changes we are guided by hospital protocols to liaise with the consultant for their advice and management.

Each week we will take on 2-3 new patients who are stable on medication that both the hospital and we have agreed can be cared for in the community. If you would like to enquire about this service please discuss with your GP when next in the practice.

Comments/Suggestions (put in suggestions box)

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