

Heathgate Herald

The Newsletter from Heathgate Medical Practice - Summer 2011
www.heathgatemedicalpractice.co.uk

Welcome to our latest Practice Newsletter. This edition features three main articles; the new patient reference group we are establishing, a layman's guide to the Government proposals to change the NHS and the availability of new patient decision aids for patients with prostate conditions. Enjoy the read!

Patient Views Your Practice needs you!

As we explain overleaf, the NHS is changing and its success will depend on all those who use it! That is why we are re-establishing our patient group.

The new group will have a very different look and feel to the one we ran a few years ago and focus on the services provided locally. Some of the areas the group may like to focus on include;

- The hours that services are available
- Continuity of care - i.e. the ability to see the same Doctor or Nurse for an ongoing issue
- The range of clinical skills that are available in the surgery
- Different methods of contacting us i.e. by telephone and E Mail.
- And above all, responding to the needs of the local area

We are looking for those with time and enthusiasm to represent the local community. No special knowledge of the healthcare arena is necessary, just the ability to speak up for the local residents of our Practice area.

We are planning to meet for the first time in September, so if you would be interested in joining the group, please leave your contact details with our reception team or E Mail our Managing Partner, Mr Gary Whiting at gary.whiting@nhs.net.

For more information on patient groups, visit the national web site at www.napp.org.uk

Patient decision aids and prostate conditions

Two new booklets are available from the Practice for patients with either prostate cancer or an enlarged prostate. These booklets, known as decision aids contain information to help inform and support patients in decisions they may make about their healthcare. They are designed to help you reach a decision with your GP.

They outline the risks and benefits of different treatment options and contain stories from other patients who have dealt with the diagnosis and how they came to their own decisions.

Both booklets include a DVD to support patients with their decision-making and include a tool to identify what is important to you, providing a summary of your answers. This can be printed for you to take to the Doctor or the Hospital for discussion.

They have been produced by 'NHS direct' but locally are being promoted by South Norfolk Healthcare, a community interest Company whose core membership is GPs in South Norfolk. South Norfolk Healthcare has a particular interest in establishing the use of patient decision aids to support patients with decisions on their health.

For those of you who may be offered a booklet from your GP or those who request one direct, South Norfolk Healthcare would be interested in your feedback on the decision aid. Visit their web site at www.snhcic.org.uk/patient/patient-decision-aids

The NHS shake up What does this mean ?

Many patients have asked our GPs and Nurses just what the proposed changes to the NHS mean. Here, our Managing Partner, Gary Whiting tries to explain the current situation.

Under the plans, GPs and other clinicians will be given more responsibility for managing substantial parts of the NHS budget. It has been reported by some commentators as one of the most radical plans in the history of the NHS.

It has proven controversial and earlier this year Government Ministers took the unprecedented step of putting plans on hold after criticisms from MPs and health bodies. An independent forum was established to review the proposals, this became known as the listening exercise, and the Government has agreed to make some changes to its plans after the forum's report called for parts of the plan to be re-written.

The changes are believed to be required as costs in the NHS are rising at a much higher rate than inflation. This is because people are getting older, increases in the costs of new drugs and treatments and increases in the number of people who have illnesses such as diabetes and obesity.

At the moment, local health managers working for Primary Care Trusts currently control much of the NHS spending, using the funds to plan and arrange services such as hospital care, mental health services and care for the elderly. The changes will see much of that responsibility transferred to new groups called Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs). Initially these groups were going to be led by GPs but after the listening exercise, hospital doctors and nurses will also now have a role to play.

As the changes happen, Primary Care Trusts and regional Trusts called Strategic Health Authorities will be phased out, although the responsibility for some services such as dentistry, GP surgeries and specialist hospital services such as neurosurgery will still sit with new nationwide Boards that

are being set up to over see the new system.

The reforms were also partly designed to encourage greater competition in the NHS, something that was also seen under the last Government, especially in some routine operations like hip and knee replacements. However the review of the proposals has seen Ministers agreeing that any further introduction of competition to the NHS is to be brought about in a more managed and balanced way.

So what changes will patients see? At a first glance very few. Patients will still visit their local surgery as a first port of call about their general health. However the Government has said that patients will be handed more choice over how and where they are treated. Patients can already choose which hospital they wish to attend for non-emergency procedures and in the future, this could apply to other types of care. Patients have been promised more details and clearer information about their health. A new body called Healthwatch will also be created to collect feedback from patients.

If everything goes to plan, then most of the new Clinical Commissioning Groups, will adopt full responsibility for the health budget in April 2013. However those Groups that do not have their full structure in place will have the help of the national Board until they are ready.

The South Norfolk area will have a new Clinical Commissioning Group looking after the needs of the patients in 20 GP surgeries and in our next newsletter, we will update you on the progress of the Southern Group.

Goodbye and good luck

We are saying good-bye to two of our Doctors in August. Dr Jeyalingam, a visiting Doctor from the hospital will be starting her full GP training in London and Dr Tony Ames, who has just completed his final GP training year with us, leaves for a new role in North Norfolk.

We wish then both the best of luck in the future and thank them for their time with us.