



Swallowfield Medical Practice Newsletter Spring 2017



Welcome to the Spring newsletter from Swallowfield Medical Practice.
This newsletter is produced jointly by the Practice and the Patient Participation Group.
Our aim is to improve communication and keep you informed.

Under Pressure – a message from Dr Beacham

We've all seen the headlines over the recent months and heard stories about the NHS, long waiting times, lack of staff- not just doctors and nurses but also support staff. This is true of Swallowfield Medical Practice. For a long time now we have prided ourselves on being a cut above the other GP surgeries, offering a first class service to our patients. Whilst we are still trying our very best to do this, it is becoming increasingly difficult. Our receptionists are highly valued members of the team who do a very difficult job, often under very difficult circumstances. The Doctors work closely with them trying to create an appointments system that offers the maximum access to clinical appointments in an overstretched system. Our reception team will ask you important questions; this is to try and ensure that you get the most appropriate appointment for your need. This means you may see a Health Care Assistant, a Practice Nurse, an Urgent Care Nurse or even a Doctor.



Over the next few years, the creation of a larger primary care team will continue. We are hoping to begin introducing Pharmacists in the near future and there will be more to come. General Practice has to change. With the depleting funding and a shrinking workforce we need to look at how we work. We will, however, always try and deliver the best healthcare we can within the constraints we work in.

Staff Update

We say goodbye to: Dr Lucy Dugmore who began her maternity leave at the end of January. We all wish her and her husband well with their new baby and are looking forward to her return in September – and some cuddles before that. We're delighted to announce too, that Dr Nick Smith and his wife are proud parents of a baby girl, Maria, born in January. We are however, saying farewell to Nick as he is leaving to take up a new post closer to his home in March. We will certainly miss him and wish him good luck. We have also recently said goodbye to 2 receptionists and a dispenser. We have been recruiting since Christmas and are very pleased to have appointed new members of staff.

Welcome to: Dr Rahela Choudry - who joins us in March for approximately 6 months to cover Dr Dugmore's maternity leave. She is looking forward to working with the team at Swallowfield. However, pressure on appointments is still enormous so if you can help at all by seeking advice from your pharmacist for example, it would be really appreciated.

In dispensary we have a new trainee dispenser, Cheryl Aldridge and also welcome Laura Childs to the reception team. As you can imagine, there is a vast amount of information which needs to be learnt before our new members of staff are fully trained. This takes many, many months, not weeks, so please be considerate when speaking to our receptionists and dispensers. The more you can help them the easier and quicker they'll be able to help you.

Congratulations also to Sister Anne Pragnell who has just passed her minor illness course. Working as part of the Acute Illness Team, Anne will be able to deal with a variety of conditions such as rashes, muscle pains, infections, respiratory problems. She will always seek additional advice from the GPs where necessary.

Missed Appointments

Between October to December 2016 414 appointments were lost to patients who failed to attend. This equates to 69 hours of valuable clinical time being wasted – at a time when general practice is under so much pressure. Please do let us know if you can't attend so that we can re-allocate your appointment to someone who really needs it. Please note that persistent offenders risk being removed from our list.

We are constantly reviewing our appointments system to try and manage the increased pressure. A recent survey of patients showed that 50% of respondents wanted same day appointments and 50% wanted appointments within 1 week. In response to this we are changing our appointments system and introducing sit and wait clinics for those patients who need to be seen on the same day – we're also hoping that this will help to reduce the number of patients who do not attend for their appointments.

Key Times to Quit Smoking

Research shows that most smokers get motivated to quit very suddenly by a specific event, milestone or resolution. A few key examples are:

- National No Smoking Day – Wednesday 8th March
- Quit when you want to get fit
- Stop Smoking if you are pregnant
- Using being ill to help you quit



Don't go it alone, there are many reasons to stop and lots of help is available for free. Use one of these key times to get, and stay, motivated to quit. Every year around a million smokers use No Smoking Day to try to quit, so you really can be one of a million.

Smokers who use their local stop smoking service are up to four times more likely to successfully stop smoking for good.

There's a confidential Stop Smoking Service here at the Swallowfield Surgery. To find out more simply ask at Reception or ring the Practice on 0118 9883134.

Put a Spring in Your Step



When the weather improves and the days get longer and lighter, a good way to boost your physical and emotional well-being is to get outside and enjoy what nature has on offer. Taking a short, brisk walk is a great form of exercise which is free and easily accessible. You don't need special equipment, just make sure that you wear sensible, supporting shoes and suitable clothing.

If you decide to give walking a try, make sure you don't overdo things at first. Aim to progress gradually over 12 weeks to really see the benefits. Just 10 minutes, building up to twice a day can make a positive difference.

Joining a local Healthy Walking Group can be a very sociable activity. Ask at your local Parish Council or library to find out what's going on in your area. Or you can find out more by going to www.wokingham.gov.uk/sports/walkingforhealth.

Swallowfield Extension Update

Planning permission was granted for the extension to Swallowfield Medical Practice over 12 months ago. Since that time we have been busy behind the scenes with quotes, bids and other legalities. We are pleased to say that we have been granted partial funding by NHS England and we hope to actually start digging the foundations in the spring. We will try to minimise the impact of the build on our patients but there may be times when car parking will be difficult. Wayne, the landlord of The Crown, has agreed that we can use their car park but unfortunately it may be necessary on occasion for patients to park on the road or even at the village hall and walk a short distance to the surgery. The extension will provide us with 3 additional consulting rooms which will make room allocation for clinicians less problematic.



In readiness for the expansion of the surgery we have already upgraded our telephone system. This has given us increased capacity with additional lines both into and out of the building as well as some reporting features. We have had some positive feedback from patients already – thank you!

EPS Update

We introduced EPS or Electronic Prescription Service in January. This service is for non-dispensing patients only and allows us to send your prescriptions electronically to your nominated pharmacy. This saves you having to collect your green prescription from us directly or from one of our collection points. If you would like to sign up for this service please speak to the pharmacy of your choice for more information.

Shingles Vaccinations



The shingles vaccination is routinely available for patients aged 70 to 73 and 78 to 79. If your birthday falls between 2 September 1942 and 1st September 1946, or 2 September 1936 and 1st September 1938, you are eligible for a shingles vaccination and will remain eligible until 31 August 2017. If you haven't already had your shingles jab and would like to have one, please telephone the surgery on 0118 9883473 to book an appointment with a practice nurse.

Did You Know These Facts About Swallowfield Medical Practice?

- We offer over 1400 GP/Nurse appointments per week
- We receive over 400 phone calls each day
- We raise over 15500 acute and repeat prescriptions each month
- We actually dispense over 6500 items each month
- We scan approximately 300 documents per day to patient records

Community Navigators

Community Navigators are available to help and support patients, getting them involved in local communities and signposting them to different voluntary organisations.



If you need extra support or information eg you may be a carer or have been diagnosed with a long term condition, you can contact this scheme directly on www.involve.community or call 01344 383515.

Do You Suffer from Blocked Ears?



Have you tried treating your problem with oil? Current guidelines advise oiling your ears with olive oil to soften the wax for up to 3 weeks, to facilitate the natural movement of wax from your ear. Don't use cotton buds or any objects to try to remove the wax – this may result in damage to your ear canal or ear drum and may even push wax further down your ear canal.

Olive oil encourages the natural movement of wax from the outer ear – you can buy bottles with droppers from your local chemist. Most patients find that applying 1-2 drops at night for up to 3 weeks is really helpful for wax removal and may save you having to book an appointment at the surgery to have your ears syringed, this service may be curtailed in future. If you do have continued problems though please do seek medical advice.

Maternity Services



Maternity services in Berkshire are changing in May. Swallowfield Medical Practice patients will continue to be seen either in the surgery or at the Red Kite Centre. They will continue to have a named midwife but may be seen by any member of their team of 4-6 midwives, who can be accessed 7 days a week. All midwife appointments will be organised via this team and not via the surgery reception. Our GPs will continue to see ladies during their pregnancy - see reception or our website for the schedule of maternity appointments.

SMP is the Top Car Service Destination

Shinfield Car Service, run by dedicated volunteers, has grown steadily since starting up seven years ago, now making journeys to around 100 regular destinations with SMP topping the list each year with over 600 trips.



A group of very dedicated voluntary drivers help to take less able patients to and from the Swallowfield surgeries for their routine appointments. An equally invaluable Bookings Team handle client requests and schedule the drivers' journeys.

Registering

If you, or someone you know, think you may be eligible to become a registered client simply contact our friendly team at the Office on **0118 9883400** Mon/Wed or Friday mornings to find out more.

To find out more about volunteering please contact Stevie Horton on **0791 7672222**

Patient Feedback – we welcome feedback from patients good and bad (preferably good!). If you have any comments please do tell us. Fill in one of the Friends and Family Test surveys – available in the surgery or online. Alternatively you could leave a review on our NHS Choices page.

Useful Numbers and Contact details

Main Line:	0118 9883134	Appointments:	0118 9883473
24hr Automated System:	0118 9769606	Dispensary:	0118 9883459
Fax:	0118 9885759	Website:	www.swallowfieldmedicalpractice.co.uk