



Swallowfield Medical Practice Newsletter Spring 2015



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.

Patient Reflections by Mike Hillier - member of Patient Participation Group

As I sat in the chair the Practice Nurse prepared to syringe my left ear - she told me 'this may feel rather weird'. At that moment my recollections flashed back to about 20 years ago when I last had my ears done. The doctor (who did these things then), said to me - 'this may hurt and you may feel dizzy - if you do, sit down' ... It did and I did. Putting oil in your ears prior to syringing was not yet a practice.

Expectations

So my expectations this time around were weighed down by previous experience, even though my wife had told me that it was now a perfectly OK experience. I mentally compared it to having injections at the dentist - it used to hurt but now it doesn't but my expectation is still confused. It feels rather weird.

Well, I hear you ask, what's all this to do with modern doctoring and medicine? Well it's all still about expectations. Incorrect expectations can and do cause disappointment, frustration, annoyance and wasted time... on both sides.



Reflections

I'm reflecting on what quality of service that I, a fairly regular patient of Swallowfield Medical Practice, expect from the surgery medical and administrative staff. I also reflect that, without doubt, SMP is a well-run organisation staffed by competent, hard-working people. I've talked to many friends and relations about their own surgeries - and it's clear to me that SMP is in the top drawer when it comes to the level of service they provide. I also reflected about what the press and the media are saying which, as far as I can see, boils down to 'You should always expect to see the doctor of choice at short notice 7 (or at least 6) days a week and around 12 hours per day'. Personally, I would not want to see any doctor who is working 12 hours a day and 6 or 7 days a week - they would be dead tired and not on their best consulting or diagnosing form. Clearly, I thought, this press attitude is driven by the need to sell newspapers and to reflect the more extreme promises and assurances made in turn by all political parties. It is an unrealistic expectation, leading to disappointment, frustration, etc.

It is also unrealistic to expect that SMP can just hire some more Doctors and Nurses to fix this. It is practically and financially not a good solution.

The other side of the coin

But, hang on, I thought, what about the other side of the coin - what are the expectations of the SMP with respect to us, their 11,500 patients? I resolved to find out. Every time I came to see a doctor, or a practice nurse, or the pharmacists, or the receptionists I asked them what they expected from their patients and here are their answers:

- Patients are expected to inform themselves about the availability of the service they need. (Website, Newsletter, Surgery screens, hand-outs). This sets most expectations to a reasonable and deliverable level.
- Patients are expected to understand that, if they want an immediate appointment with a Doctor or Nurse, it is probable they will not be able to see their person of choice.
- Having made an appointment, patients are definitely expected to keep that appointment or, if there is a problem, call the surgery to cancel.

My expectation is that you would all agree with these three points.

Patient Responsibility

So, in that case, I reflected, why is it that the SMP patient responsibility apparently causes all kinds of problems and knock-on effects? Staff also told me that all three of these critical expectations are often not met. It led me to the conclusion that, if there is a problem with appointments that perhaps we, the patients, are sometimes not helping. So, I asked myself these questions:

- 1) Do I really understand what is on offer from the SMP and do I plan my appointments with this in mind?
- 2) If I want to make an immediate appointment (i.e. my condition needs immediate attention and is my top priority for the day), do I make myself available with as much flexibility as I can?
- 3) If I need to change or cancel any appointment, do I always call the surgery and cancel without fail?

If my answer to any of these questions is 'no', then I am almost certainly causing disappointment, frustration, annoyance and wasted time... both to myself and to others.

My firm resolution is to try to stick to being able to answer 'yes' to all three questions.

What's Yours?

Medical Dictionary:

'Acute' Indicates a sudden onset of medical symptoms as opposed to 'Chronic' where symptoms continue over a long period of time.

(So, for example arthritis pain can be described as 'chronic' whereas the pain of a migraine could be described as 'acute'.)



Donations to the Practice

Thanks to generous donations received from patients the Practice has recently purchased an additional '24hr Heart Monitor'. This valuable piece of diagnostic medical equipment is for use at home by patients. Dr Prabhakar says "We are so pleased to be able to enhance patient care in this way and say a very big thank you indeed".

Staff Update

- Dr Ansari: Has now resumed his normal working pattern and on behalf of everyone at the Practice, and all his patients, we warmly welcome him back full time.
- Dr Niall Riddell: Continues to provide a locum service for us. The recruitment process is ongoing but so far there have been no suitable applicants.

- Our dispensary is now fully staffed with two new members, Louise Broome and Sue Henderson recently joining the team,

Breast Screening - a patient's comments



We are very lucky in Swallowfield to have the breast screening unit visit to us every 3 years. Some of you may have noticed it was with us for longer than previous years - not surprising when you consider that over 1300 ladies were screened. A patient wrote the following:

'I would like to thank Swallowfield Medical Practice for having the Breast Screening Unit in the car park at the end of last year.

I was a little bit surprised to be asked to go for screening as I am not yet 50 years old. However, I found out they were trialling the screening on women aged between 47 and 50. Thank goodness I did go. My routine scan showed up an abnormality which meant that I had to go to the Royal Berkshire Hospital for various tests and scans. Thankfully everything has turned out alright but I will be monitored annually from now on. I think we are very fortunate to have this facility on our doorstep and I would encourage all women (and men) to go along for their screening checks.'

Appointment Pressure Update

We're pleased to be able to report that the length of time needed to make a bookable appointment to see the Doctor of your choice has fallen. However, don't forget that, as suggested in the 'Patient's Reflections' article, patient responsibility can make a huge difference to appointment availability and your co-operation is very much appreciated.

We are also pleased that the number of patients who failed to attend their appointment with a Doctor or Nurse during the winter period has also fallen. *(Many of you have expressed shock at the number of missed appointments (235) in October, as reported in our Winter Newsletter – Ed)*

Quick Quiz - Travel Vaccinations



How much time is needed to arrange travel vaccinations if required?

- a) 6 days b) 16 days c) 6 weeks

Answer: If you're going away somewhere exotic this summer you must remember to arrange your travel vaccinations **at least 6 weeks** before you go. Just call Reception on 0118 9883473 to book an appointment with a nurse to discuss your requirements.

We'd like to contact you by email



Make Swallowfield a 'greener' Practice

Technology keeps moving on and we're being urged to be kind to the environment. In our efforts to be a 'greener' practice we'd like to reduce the number of letters we send out by post, instead reaching as many patients as we can by email. With your permission we'd like to contact you by email to remind you of your doctor's appointments, recall you for your annual

reviews as well as being able to send you our newsletters and any other communications which will keep you informed of what's happening in the Practice. We're currently in the process of collecting patient email addresses. If you haven't already done so, please let our Receptionists know your current email address for correspondence. If there's more than one person sharing one email address please let us know who the relevant people are - we'll need explicit consent from each person to use this shared email address. Or perhaps you may be able to provide us with an alternative email address.

No email? - Don't worry

Please don't worry if you don't have access to a computer or an email address. For those patients without, we will still contact you by normal post, as necessary.



Cut & Keep-----

Bracknell Urgent Care Centre & Newbury Minor Injuries Unit

For anyone requiring immediate treatment that is not life threatening

Walk in, complete a short form and wait to see a clinician. You can also call the centres, speak to a clinician for advice and, if necessary they will book you an appointment to see a GP or Nurse.

The Urgent Care Centre/Minor Injuries Unit will treat most injuries that are not life threatening eg: sprains, broken bones, scalds and minor burns, minor head injuries, stings and bites. They also have access to diagnostic tests including Xrays.

What is the difference between A&E and the Urgent Care Centre?

Accident & Emergency Departments are for people with life threatening illnesses or injuries e.g. heart attack, serious car accidents. UCCs are for urgent but not life threatening illnesses.

Bracknell Urgent Care Centre
Royal Berkshire Bracknell Healthspace
London Road
Bracknell
RG12 9BG

Tel: 01344 551100
Open 8am - 8pm

Newbury Minor Injuries Unit
West Berkshire Community Hospital
London Road
Benham Hill, Thatcham
RG18 3AS

Tel: 01635 273508
Open 8am - 10pm

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