



Three Shires Medical Practice Newsletter

Summer2024

Partner Update

I hope you have all been enjoying the recent improvement in the weather. In the last newsletter, one of our partners Dr Dana Parr, wrote about some of the financial challenges facing General Practice in the UK and our Practice in particular. We have received some enquiries from patients following this, so I will provide a brief update.

In essence, for some time now, the funding we receive in General Practice has not kept up with increasing demand for services or with the inflationary costs associated with operating the surgeries. The Three Shires Practice is particularly vulnerable to the latter, due to operating four sites over a large rural area. We have recently had discussions with the local NHS body and despite highlighting the challenges we face; it would appear they actually plan to cut funding for some of the services we provide!

Dr Greenway, (our managing partner) as well as the other partners, have also been in touch with local politicians and we hope to take discussions further to highlight these issues. We are far from being the only GP Practice facing funding challenges and you may have heard of other Practices in the region that are also experiencing difficulties. I should add that at present we have no plans to close any of our surgeries. I would like to thank the various members of our Patient Participation Group (PPG) for all their hard work in trying to raise awareness of these problems. (Please see their entry further in the newsletter for more details).

At the time of writing, a date for a general election has just been announced for early July 2024. Let's hope that the new government (whichever party that may be), re-prioritises the NHS and addresses the significant problems facing General Practice.

On a more positive note, the Practice is happy to have new members to the Practice team as mentioned in the staff update section. We have now also started offering COVID vaccinations at some of the branch surgeries which we were previously unable to offer.

I hope you all enjoy the coming summer months and that the next practice newsletter has better news for us all.

Best Wishes, Dr Pedro Pinto

Staff Update

We welcomed the following new members to the Practice team:
Mandy Cargill and Katarina Gergelova joined the nursing team.
Catherine Walker joined the Pucklechurch reception team.
Victoria Lee joined the care coordinator team and
Karen Wiltshire joined the practice management team.

Practice Matters

You asked, we did - Arrangements for Telephone Appointments

Question: The PPG asked the practice if it would be possible to give a time 'window' for a telephone consultation appointment callback from a clinician.

Answer: The matter was put on the practice partners' meeting agenda for discussion. It was agreed that patients will be informed of either a morning, afternoon, or early evening call. The cut off time for a morning call will be for those phoning the surgery before 1100hrs unless demand exceeds capacity on a morning; at which point they will be moved to the afternoon/early evening list. Clinicians are dealing with many things that could potentially delay all appointments, phone, or face to face therefore the Practice cannot guarantee this but will try its best to accommodate.

Practice Opening Hours

From 1st July 2024 we will be aligning our surgeries opening hours as follows:

	Colerne	Marshfield	Wick	Pucklechurch
Monday	0830-1730	0830-1730	0830-1830	0830-1730
Tuesday	0830-1730	0830-1830	0830-1730	0830-1730
Wednesday	0830-1830	0830-1730	0830-1730	0830-1730
Thursday	0830-1730	0830-1730	0830-1730	0830-1830
Friday	0830-1730	0830-1730	0830-1730	0830-1730

Prescription Charges

From 1st May 2024, new prescription charges apply. The cost of a single item prescription rises from £9.65 to £9.90. A three-month **Prescription Prepayment Certificate (PPC)** rises from £31.25 to £32.05, and a twelve-month certificate rises from £111.60 to £114.50.

If you need more than one item of medication each month on a regular basis and you are not eligible for free prescriptions, it may be worth considering a Prescription Prepayment Certificate.

You can buy PPC's online or call the order line on 0300 330 1341 and pay by debit card or with a credit card. For more information, please go to www.gov.uk/get-a-ppc

Practice Dispensaries and Vaccination Clinics

You may be aware that significant problems exist regarding shortages of certain medications. Our Practice pharmacists are working extremely hard to try and deal with these problems but unfortunately this seems to be a national problem affecting all pharmacies/dispensaries.

We're aware that some of our patients may have been offered the opportunity to have their medication dispensed by pharmaceutical services outside of the Practice. Obviously, every patient should choose how best to receive their medication, however it will help the Practice financially if our patients have their medication dispensed from the Practice.

We also benefit financially if you have vaccinations such as for flu and COVID provided by the Practice. Given what you have read in this and our previous newsletter about the Practice's financial situation, we hope that you can help us to help you.

Practice Online Services

You can contact the Practice online about both medical and administrative issues. However, don't use it for urgent medical problems or medication requests. Click on the "Contact Us Online" tab on our website, you will go to a page asking if it is an administrative query or a medical request and follow the guidance from there. Online requests are read by a member of the Practice team and responded to, within two working days. You can also access the NHS app and Patient Access from the Practice website but please be aware that they are both completely separate and independent organisations over which Three Shires has no control or influence.

Patient Participation Group (PPG) Update

You will be aware from our Spring newsletter and this current edition, of the financial difficulties facing Three Shires and many GP Practices serving rural communities. Our GP Practice is in a particularly difficult position attracting one set of NHS funding but running four surgery sites with all the maintenance, energy, staff, and equipment costs to meet the health needs of 9,700 patients living in Pucklechurch, Wick, Marshfield and Colerne and all the surrounding villages and hamlets. Following our February PPG meeting, members of the PPG along with many patients, have written to our MP's Luke Hall and James Gray. We have also contacted our local councillors, Cllrs Palmer, and Stokes, had meetings with them and through their contacts, have attended and addressed South Gloucestershire Health and Scrutiny Committee. We have also been in touch with local media.

By the time you read this newsletter, we hope that the situation will not have deteriorated. We were much reassured at our April PPG meeting that there are no immediate plans to close any of our four surgeries. However, this may have to be considered later in the year if Government do not wake up and improve GP Practice funding.

The response to our appeal for new PPG members has been fantastic. **Thank You!!** We now have our full quota of PPG 20 members. If you would still like to be involved, please join the Patient Reference Group from whom the PPG seeks views, opinions, and issues to bring to PPG meetings. To join the Patient Reference Group, go to the Practice website, www.threeshiresmedical.co.uk click on 'Have Your Say' and it will take you to the relevant page where you can sign up to the Reference Group.

Fire Safety Checks

You or the person you care for, may be entitled to a free Fire Safety Visit. Avon Fire and Rescue offer these visits to people,

- Aged 65 or over,
- With sight and hearing loss,
- Have mobility concerns,
- Have mental health and/or memory issues,
- Are unable to escape unaided in the event of a fire,
- Are a family with children under 5 years of age.

To find out more call 0117 926 2061 or go to the website www.avonfire.gov.uk

Scam Alert

Beware of being drawn in by the promise of a guaranteed win!! Be wary of letters, emails or texts asking you to send money or provide personal information. You could be told that you have won a prize for a competition you have not even entered. You could be told that you have been specially selected and that you are a guaranteed winner! You will be asked to send a small fee to claim your prize! You cannot win a competition that you have never entered; **so, if you are asked for an upfront payment, DO NOT PAY**, because the scammers will then have your personal information.

Memory Café

The Memory Café continues to flourish at Doynton Village Hall on the first Thursday of each month from 2pm until 4pm. The café is a free drop in for people living with a cognitive impairment or a dementia bringing with them a family member, carer, or friend. For more information, please contact us on 0781 731 1001.

Carers Week

Carers Week, an annual awareness raising week highlighting the challenges faced by unpaid carers, runs from 10th to 16th June. Our local Carers Support Centre holds its main event on Thursday 13th June at the BAWA centre. **For more information contact Carers line on 0117 956 2200.**