

# KNEBORTH AND MARYMEAD MEDICAL PRACTICE

## *PATIENT PARTICIPATION GROUP NEWSLETTER*

*August 2020*

### **Getting Back to Normal**

During August and September we will be restarting most of our normal services for all patients. Our shielded patients are already being reviewed and, where appropriate, being seen by our doctors and nurses with face-to-face appointments. At the beginning of September we will start our IUCD/Implanon clinics. Chronic disease reviews with our nurses will also be getting back to normal in the next week or two.

One service that is a problem at the moment is phlebotomy. Before Covid-19 came along, we had regular phlebotomy clinics at both surgeries. The staff for these was provided by the East and North Herts Hospital Trust but this was withdrawn as the impact of Covid-19 developed. We are discussing with the Trust at the moment when we may be able to restart these. In the interim we are hopeful that our recently-recruited practice nurse (Dee) will be able to provide a limited phlebotomy service at our own surgeries. This would be restricted to those patients who are unable to get to the phlebotomy clinics at the local hospitals and to any patients needing urgent blood tests following a review with one of our GPs.

We are restarting our services slowly so that we can make sure the safety measures we have put in place to protect both you and ourselves from Covid-19 are working, but our aim is to be providing all our regular services by the end of September.

The impact of Covid-19 safety measures on our appointment availability is an issue that will affect all of us. For example, if a practice nurse has to do a vaccination, we would normally allocate 10 minutes for this. But because of Covid-19 we will now have to allow 15 to 20 minutes. The nurse will have to change their PPE and thoroughly clean the consulting/nurse's room after each patient. This will, of course, mean longer appointment times and thus reduce our availability of appointments. The likely impact of this on appointment waiting times is difficult to assess but as we restart our services we will be able to see the effect of this and, hopefully, take actions to mitigate any significant increase in waiting times.

*Ken Spooner, Practice Manager*

### **Flu Vaccination Programme**

As a direct result of the continuing Covid-19 pandemic, the Government has recommended that this year free flu vaccinations should be offered not only to "at risk" patients and the over-65s but also to all patients over the age of 50. This will create immense logistical problems for our Practice, as it will for all Practices. As well as an increase of more than two thousand patients who will be able to receive the vaccine - bringing the total to about 4,500 - there will be the added complication of ensuring that the necessary Covid-19 restrictions regarding safety and social distancing are rigidly adhered to by both clinical staff and patients.

It will take a little time for the Practice to develop detailed plans and timescales on how to deal with these new aspects of the vaccination programme - which is due to start at the end of September - and patients will be informed of how this is going to work as soon as it is practicable to do so.

## **Telephone Triage and Video-link Appointments**

As a direct result of the Covid-19 pandemic, telephone triage and, when appropriate, video links have become recognized as the primary route for clinical appointments; these are now likely to continue to be the standard procedure. These appointments may be booked in advance but normally the receptionist will inform the patient that they will get a call back later the same day. The doctor or nurse conducting the telephone or video appointment may then decide to see the patient face-to-face in order to confirm the diagnosis and determine what treatment may be required. The Practice accepts that there are some patients who may find difficulty with this arrangement and in such instances the receptionist will be able to help.

## **Patient Participation Group (PPG) News**

Although it's a few months since there was a full PPG Meeting, the Officers would like to assure you that we have continued to meet with Ken, the Practice Manager - albeit by Zoom rather than face-to-face. At these meetings, we have discussed ways in which the important link between the Practice and the PPG can be maintained during these difficult times. The continued production and distribution of a newsletter, such as this one, is still considered to be useful, and many of our members have also found valuable information in various contributions on the Practice Facebook pages.

Nevertheless, these cannot replace the presentations and discussions that used to take place at our regular monthly Meetings. With this in mind, we have decided that we should hold a virtual meeting - via Zoom. This will take place at 7.00 pm on Tuesday, 22nd September; further details, including the Agenda, will be available nearer the date.

## **PPG CONTACTS**

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***Produced by The Knebworth and Marymead Patient Participation Group***