

KNEBWORTH AND MARYMEAD MEDICAL PRACTICE

PATIENT PARTICIPATION GROUP NEWSLETTER

December 2018

Practice News

We are pleased to welcome Dr Emily Auld to the Practice. She will be with us for four months as part of her General Practice training.

We understand that the section of St Martin's Church which is to be used as a temporary home for the Library is now being fitted out and that library equipment and books are scheduled to be transferred there in mid-January. The library site should then be handed over to the developers and work on the new Knebworth Surgery should start in earnest.

Lister Hospital Health Shuttle

Unfortunately, it would appear that the fate of the Lister Health Shuttle, the subsidised door-to-door service for staff, patients and visitors going to Lister Hospital in Stevenage and also between Lister and the New QEII Hospital in Welwyn Garden City, has been sealed. We understand that, because of funding issues, it will be discontinued from 14th December and that, for the most part, patients and visitors will have to rely on other community transport providers such as North Herts CVS.

East and North Herts Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), who are responsible for non-emergency patient transport, has withdrawn the funding for the Health Shuttle since it is considered that the annual cost of about £160,000 is not sustainable. The PPG intends to contact the CCG to express its concern and, hopefully, to explore other options for the transportation of patients and visitors.

The Return of Unused or Unwanted Medicinal Products

This is a reminder that the surgeries cannot take out-of-date medicines or those that you no longer require or are partly used. But they can be returned to your local pharmacy, who will accept them for disposal.

However, there are exceptions. Unused chemotherapy drugs or similarly toxic ones that were prescribed for you by a hospital may have to be taken back to the hospital - your local pharmacist can advise you on that. Unused injectable products or empty syringes must be carefully disposed of in special yellow containers called "sharps boxes" that you can obtain from Herts County Council; they will deliver empty boxes to you and collect full ones.

Different Types of Prescriptions

Gone are the days when the only way that your prescription was presented was on a small form - known as an FP10 - with the doctor's name and address printed at the top and the name and dosage of the medicine handwritten (sometimes almost illegibly!) in the middle of the form. That has all changed and most, but not all, prescriptions are now produced electronically. Not only is this a more efficient process but it is also much safer because the printed details of your medication are unlikely to be misread or misinterpreted by the dispensing pharmacist. There are other advantages of prescriptions produced in this way – for example, they can be sent electronically to your nominated pharmacy and can be dispensed there more efficiently.

But whether you have a paper or an electronic prescription, there are different ways in which they can be actioned. For example, if you have a doctor's appointment and the GP prescribes you a new medication, the prescription may be sent electronically to the pharmacy or, possibly, you will be handed a printed version on the old FP10 to take to whichever pharmacy you wish.

However, if you are on a particular drug or on a series of medications that you take at a regular, unchanging dosage, there is a prescription process known as **Pathfinder** where a six-month or yearly batch of prescriptions is sent electronically to your nominated pharmacy, for them to dispense and for you to collect at monthly intervals without having to go to the surgery each time. For your Pathfinder to be renewed, you then only need to have your medication reviewed half-yearly or annually by our Clinical Pharmacist or by the GP. This is a very efficient system but, however, it is not suitable for some drugs, such as warfarin or methotrexate, where the dosage regime can be quite variable over short periods. Also, Pathfinder cannot, as yet, be used for Controlled Drugs, such as powerful analgesics.

If for any reason Pathfinder is not a suitable procedure for you, then there is still the simple repeat prescription process where each month, or more frequently, either you or the pharmacy can request a prescription for you.

At the Knebworth and Marymead Practice, approximately 90% of prescriptions are prepared electronically and there are about another 7% of prescriptions that cannot be provided in this way. If you have any questions about your prescriptions and how they are or may be processed, don't hesitate to ask to have a word with Lisa, the Clinical Pharmacist, or either of the Prescription Clerks (Debbie and Sharon).

Pharmacists' Meeting

The recent meeting with staff from a number of the local retail pharmacies again proved to be a useful basis for contact between the Practice and the dispensing professionals.

The main part of the Meeting on 21st November was taken up by an interesting demonstration of an NHS-accredited app by a representative from Healthera. The app can basically provide a link between the patient, the Practice and a nominated pharmacy and is aimed to reduce the number of phone calls to the Practice or to the pharmacy concerning the whereabouts of a prescription. Our Practice Manager is quite interested in this innovative approach to improving efficiency within the Practice and we look forward to hearing more on this in due course. Out of interest, the Healthera app is available for downloading from the App store.

Other items discussed at the Meeting were:

- this year's flu vaccination statistics; uptake has been lower than last year, mainly because of supply problems causing appointment difficulties.
- patients are to be advised to ensure that their repeat prescriptions are ordered by 17th December to cover the Christmas and New Year period.
- local pharmacies are to be asked to provide their resource information (opening times, services available etc) which will be collated to form a new section in the Practice website.
- multiple prescriptions, where some items are no longer necessary or no longer used by the patient, are still a problem. Our Clinical Pharmacist is slowly working through these and our Practice Manager asked the pharmacies to report any that came to their attention.
- the CCG is monitoring the prescribing of OTC products following their directive on those that should not be available on prescription. The Practice should receive a copy of their report which we will then publicise.
- Lloyds in Knebworth reported that Dosette boxes for new patients will initially take two weeks to prepare; Dosette box changes will take one week. There will be an increase of staff at Lloyds when the permanent pharmacist takes over in January.

Can You Help Us to Test the New NHS App?

The Knebworth and Marymead Medical Practice is helping the NHS to test their new app and we need your help. We are one of the first practices in the country to test the NHS App and we would like you to try it and tell us what you think.

The NHS App provides a simple and secure way to access a range of healthcare services on your smartphone or tablet. Once registered, you will be able to book and manage appointments at our Practice, order your repeat prescriptions, securely view your GP medical record, and much more.

Your feedback is very important. It will help the NHS to improve the app before they launch it to patients across the country. To test the NHS App you must be over 16 years of age, registered with our Practice and have an Apple or Android smartphone or tablet.

For more information and to register to take part, visit www.nhs.uk/nhsapp.

Christmas and New Year Arrangements

Knebworth and Marymead surgeries will both be open as usual up to and including Christmas Eve. They will be closed on Christmas Day and Boxing Day and will reopen on Thursday, 27th December. The surgeries will be open until 6.30 pm on New Year's Eve, then closed on New Year's Day and will reopen on Wednesday, 2nd January.

If you require medical assistance when the surgeries are closed, call Herts Urgent Care on 111. If it is serious, go to the Accident and Emergency Department at the Lister Hospital or call 999. The Extended Access surgery at Sollershott in Letchworth will be open for routine appointments during these three Bank Holidays but will not be available for urgent or emergency appointments.

For the most part, retail pharmacies will be closed on Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year's Day. However, a list of those in the locality that will be open on one or other of these days for the dispensing of prescriptions will be posted in pharmacy windows.

Prescription Arrangements over the Holiday Period

With the surgeries closed on Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year's Day, it is important that you have enough of your medicines to see you over this period. If you think that you will run out or have difficulty picking up prescriptions, make sure the Practice is aware of this by 17th December at the latest so that the necessary prescriptions are processed in good time.

Forthcoming PPG Meetings

The next PPG Meeting will be on Tuesday, 18th December from 7.00 pm at Knebworth Surgery. Our January Meeting will be on Tuesday, the 29th, at Marymead Surgery. All patients are welcome to attend, you don't have to be a signed-up member of the PPG. The Meetings are invariably over within an hour.

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