

KNEBWORTH AND MARYMEAD MEDICAL PRACTICE

PATIENT PARTICIPATION GROUP NEWSLETTER – October 2016

HEALTH WALKS - UPDATE

Our mini walks in the park every other Tuesday are proving to be a real success. If you have an hour to spare, we would love to see you. We meet at 10.30 am near the pavilion in the main Knebworth Recreation Ground; if driving, the entrance is in Watton Road and, if coming by bus or walking, there is an entrance from Stevenage Road. The walk is on flat, level ground and lasts for about 20 minutes; we then go for an (optional) coffee at Caffe Vero nearby. Some of us use walking sticks, others have buggies or wheelchairs and everyone also enjoys chatting! The walk is part of the national Health Walks scheme; our leaders are trained and have had the requisite first aid training.

The walk is open to everyone, not just our patients. We have even had a visitor from New Zealand! The next walk is on Tuesday, 25th October, with the same arrangements as above, and we will be there whatever the weather!

New walkers are always very welcome.

SURGERY UPDATE

The Practice has now administered around 1600 flu vaccinations. For those of you still requiring a vaccination, please contact the surgery as soon as you can so that they can arrange an appointment for you.

Giving up smoking is one of the best ways of improving your health and saving yourself money. The Practice can help you give up. Contact your surgery to make an appointment with one of the stop-smoking specialists.

As we approach the winter months, the demand for doctor and nurse appointments increases. Please remember that if you want an same day appointment, these are for urgent medical conditions. Please do not ask for an urgent appointment for such matters as medical certificates or repeat prescriptions.

After a number of unfortunate delays, the launch of the new Practice website is imminent. However, only slow progress is being made on the planning application for the new surgery in Knebworth.

EMERGENCY SUPPLY OF PRESCRIPTION MEDICINES

If you have run out or are about to run out of your medication and the surgery is closed, you can obtain a seven day supply from your usual pharmacy without a prescription. There is no need to contact the out-of-hours doctors, go to your pharmacy and they will be able to help you. You can then put your prescription request into the surgery as normal.

RECLAIM ON COUNCIL TAX

MoneySavingExpert.com can reveal that tens of thousands of people who have a severe mental impairment or live with someone with that condition be able to reclaim their Council Tax, after three charities warned many overpay. One MoneySaver told us that her mother was refunded £3,000 after overpaying for seven years. Here's how to claim- simply contact the District Council offices and ask about it.

Someone who has been medically certified as having a permanent condition that affects their intelligence and social functioning (such as Alzheimer's or Parkinson's disease) is 'disregarded for council tax purposes' in England, Scotland and Wales – in a similar way that students are, for example.

Normally if there's only one person living in a home, you get a 25% Council Tax discount anyway. But if you live with someone with a severe mental impairment and there are no other adults in the property – or there are only adults who are disregarded for Council Tax purposes – you can also claim 25% off. You can reclaim retrospectively too.

Anyone with a severe mental impairment who is living alone shouldn't be paying any Council Tax at all.

SURVEY OF OUTPATIENT APPOINTMENT PROBLEMS

If you or your family have experienced any problems with recent outpatient appointments with any local hospitals, but particularly the Lister, then the PPG would like to hear about it. We are planning to survey all patients to try and understand how problems arise. Hopefully, this will then help the hospitals to avoid recurrence of such problems.

Issues that we have heard of include appointment letters being received after the actual appointment day, operations cancelled at very short notice then not being rescheduled for a long while, patients phoning the consultant's secretary but not getting through, etc.

We intend to set up a formal survey process, either online or on paper, but in the meantime please email ken.spooner@nhs.uk with your particular experience, stating what date the problem occurred, which hospital and department, what the problem was, and whether it has been resolved or how it was resolved.

CARE.DATA – THE ELECTRONIC RECORD OF PATIENT INFORMATION

Have you exercised your right to not allow your own patient record to be accessed by anyone else in the NHS? It's your right and you should contact the surgery if you would like to prevent such contact from happening. However, please bear in mind that if you do so, it means that the A&E Department at the Lister, or any other hospital, will not have access to your notes and therefore will be unable to ascertain your ailments and current medications in the event that you are brought into the unit unable to communicate. Some patients worry about their records being accessed by insurance companies or other commercial bodies; such action is not allowed and will never happen. On the other hand, anonymised data from your care records, joining thousands if not millions of other patients, might be the 'big data' breakthrough on medical treatments that can help all society in the future.

PHARMACISTS MEETING

The Practice Manager, appropriate Practice staff and a PPG member hold meetings on a quarterly basis with local pharmacists within the catchment area of the Knebworth and Marymead surgeries. These enable all concerned to better understand the difficulties encountered by the pharmacists and by the Practice in order to ensure a better all-round service to our patients.

Our most recent meeting was earlier this month and topics discussed included:

- the need for enhanced advertising of the availability of emergency contraception (the “morning-after pill”) in local pharmacies
- the provision and organisation of Dossette boxes and the role of doctors in determining the medical need aligned to patient safety
- the continuing problem of multiple prescriptions listed in some patient records
- the listing of local pharmacies and their opening hours on the Practice website
- the short-term emergency supply of prescription medicines (see above)
- the arrangements for local pharmacy opening hours over the Christmas period.

PPG MEETINGS

The PPG meetings start at 7.00 pm and last for just one hour, the next meeting will be on 8th November at Knebworth Surgery.

Don't forget, you can sign up, safely, to follow the PPG happenings on our surgery Facebook page - simply go into your own Facebook page and search for Knebworth and Marymead Patient's Facebook page and press on the request to join - you will be registered as a fully-fledged member within 24 hours.

USEFUL WEBSITES

If the surgery is closed and you need medical advice or assistance, call 111

Surgery website: knebworthandmarymeaddr.co.uk

Our local NHS Commissioning Body: enhertscg.nhs.uk

Our local Hospital Trust (the Lister and the New QEII): enherts-tr.nhs.uk

NHS Choices - information and advice on the NHS: nhs.uk

PPG CONTACTS

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