



## **Doctors Question Time at AGM JUNE 2012**

DQT panel : Drs Malcolm Maclean, Cheryl Lambe and Karen Crawford Clarke with Katie Hill, Practice Manager.

### **Why is it so difficult to make an appointment with my own GP ?**

We do sympathise, as it is ideal to see your own GP. However if you want to see someone fairly quickly, that is not always possible. You can now book with your own GP up to three weeks ahead, so there is usually an appointment available, but you may have to wait, or perhaps travel to Partridge Green. A telephone appointment may also be available as an alternative. If, however, you want to see someone quickly, then other members of the medical staff will have access to your records and will be able to see you. We are a training practice, and registrars ( who are fully qualified GPs in training ) have 15 min slots rather than the usual 10 mins. Doctors' PAs will often be involved in follow-up communication.

The receptionists will often ask why you need an appointment - this is not idle curiosity, it is just that often one of the specialist nurses can help you just as effectively. The NHS as a whole is now moving away from personal lists, but here in Henfield we value the relationship.

### **Why are most of the GPs described as 'part-time' ?**

The job has changed - a full-time doctor used to do ten sessions of consultations each week. This is no longer possible as time has to be set aside for meetings ( including travel ), training ( both giving and receiving ) and the extraordinary amount of paperwork that needs to be done. Full-time doctors now do eight consultation sessions each week, and this has sometimes been misleadingly referred to as 'part-time'.

### **Has the size of a doctor's list gone down ?**

Yes, a bit and there are several reasons for this. We are living longer so we need more late-life care. Many conditions that we used not to be able to treat can now be alleviated. We have become more demanding. There are also targets that the Practice is working to meet, in order to promote better health.

### **Will the Practice be able to cope with 400 extra patients from St Peter's Meadow ?**

Yes, we are currently looking at this. We shall probably appoint another doctor. Currently the building is adequate, and we have 12 consulting doctors and 3 or 4 trainees. Sometimes overseas doctors come here to observe for two weeks. The main advantage of being a training practice is that it brings enthusiastic young doctors into the Practice with new skills and new ideas.

### **How is GP commissioning affecting the Practice ?**

This will take time to get going. Henfield is in a group with Steyning - the Chanctonbury Locality Group meets regularly, and there other meetings for planning and training. We are looking at new pathways and standards for people moving into secondary care. Referrals are monitored. Jennie Morrison-Cowan from Cherish Care comments that referrals for end-of-life care will be better done by GPs.

### **Why are path lab results only available between 2 pm and 5 pm ?**

This is mainly because the results come in during the morning, and need to be seen by the doctor before being passed to the patient. Another reason is that the phones are very busy during the mornings, so the request helps to spread the workload.

### **Why are some patients referred to St Richard's in Chichester, which is difficult for elderly patients to travel to ?**

There are some specialist procedures that are only available there, but we agree that patients should be referred locally if possible. Sometimes NSK patients used to be referred to Redhill after assessment at Horsham, but that has not happened recently. Patients are advised to question a referral to a distant hospital as sometimes there is an alternative.

### **How is the Practice preparing for increasing numbers of older patients ?**

We accept that older people need as much continuity of treatment as possible. Each patient will have a named doctor, but there will be a regular team treating the patient, so that he or she will always see a familiar face. The GPs liaise with local hospices, as well as with the care teams.

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When the conversation became general, the Med Centre website was discussed. The new format had only been in place for six weeks, so it was ( and is ) still a work in progress. On-line appointment booking is being piloted for asthma clinics, and if this is successful, it will be extended to other clinics, and eventually to all appointments as an option.