

THE HUNGERFORD SURGERY PATIENT NEWSLETTER

www.hungerfordsurgery.co.uk

Issue 1 – Winter 2010

Happy New Year



Welcome to our first patient newsletter for several years and certainly the first edition since I joined the surgery as Practice Manager in 2008. Our initial objective is to publish four editions per

year, each containing news updates and healthcare related information, and we hope you will find it an informative and enjoyable read. A copy of the newsletter can be picked up from the surgery or downloaded from our website address above. We would welcome your suggestions as to what you would like to see featured in the newsletters and patients will hopefully feel inclined to send in their own contributions in due course.

*Mike Hall
Practice Manager*

Swine Flu



You will not be surprised to read that we spent a lot of time planning and preparing for potentially large numbers of cases of swine flu in the Hungerford area during 2009.

We were able to vaccinate over 850 patients against the H1N1 virus during November and December and it is a credit to our staff that essential and routine services were seamlessly maintained during this time.

We are now able to offer the vaccine to children aged over 6 months and under 5 years old. Parents should have received further information and a letter of invitation from our Primary Care Trust – NHS Berkshire West – and should then contact the surgery on 01488 682507 to book an appointment with a Practice Nurse.

Whilst the anticipated flu pandemic has not yet materialised, we continue to monitor events closely to ensure that we remain as well prepared as possible.

We encourage practice patients to keep themselves informed, if possible, by checking the Government's website:
www.direct.gov.uk/pandemic.

Its snow joke!

The recent severe winter weather has caused problems for us all although the thaw seems to have definitely set in now.

Many routine and non-urgent appointments had to be postponed and re-arranged, often at short notice, as Doctors, Nurses and staff, and of course our patients struggled to get into the surgery.

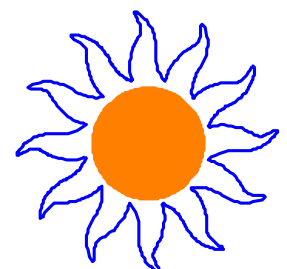


We apologise for any inconvenience caused by the snow and ice and would like to thank patients for bearing with us and our staff for doing their best to ensure that 'normal service' was maintained as much as possible.

A special mention for our team of District Nurses who generally managed to get out to peoples homes against the odds. I'm sure that their patients were very pleased to see them.

Even 4x4 vehicles have taken on a new popularity and we are especially grateful to our man Gerald who defied the conditions to ferry GP's and staff to and from the surgery.

Roll on the summer!



Ringling the changes

2009 was definitely a year of change at the practice as we said goodbye to four long serving members of staff who decided to retire. Elaine Smith, Jean



Burbidge, Diana New and Verna Ford had given a combined total of over 60 years service to the surgery and whilst very sorry to see them leave, we were able to give them all a good send off and wish them a long and happy retirement.

Also retiring from having given over 15 years service to the surgery was our cleaner Pat Shanks and we hope she is enjoying spending more time with her grandchildren.



Of course replacing such a vast amount of experience and wide range of skills is not easy in such a short space of time but we were able to welcome new Receptionists Sian Robinson, Joanne Ulry and Sharon Stone to the team during 2009 and our new Medical Secretary Angela Wynn joined us just before Christmas. We are all looking forward to things settling down during the New Year and wish all of our new recruits a long and happy career with the practice.

Dr Sarah Bruen made a welcome return to the surgery in August following maternity leave and we were also pleased to be able to secure the services of Dr Andrea Clark who joined in September to help look after Dr Bruen's patient list.

Value your appointment



At the Hungerford Surgery we value every single appointment as an opportunity to provide our patients with the best service possible. We hope you share our view that appointment time is precious and you may therefore be surprised to learn

that **over 100 people per month** fail to turn up for appointments they themselves have booked.

That is an alarming 1,200 wasted appointments per year or to put it another way over 200 hours of wasted NHS resources which could be put to better use. Doctors and nurses left waiting and wondering if patients are going to turn up is not a good use of precious clinical time. Whilst we fully understand that things don't always go to plan and that missing an appointment is sometimes unavoidable, our frustration at seeing appointments wasted is compounded when patients haven't called to cancel or to let us know when they are running late.

Despite our best efforts, we know that patients are occasionally unable to get the type of appointment they want, at the time they want and with the doctor or nurse they wish to see. However, we also know that the availability of appointments would be greatly improved, and indeed waiting times reduced, if we were able to see a significant reduction in the number of missed appointments.

From the 5 minute blood test with our Healthcare Assistant and the 10 minute consultation with your GP, through to the 30 minute health check with one of our Practice Nurses, your appointment is very valuable and we really hope that you will give us your support in our efforts to improve in this area in 2010.

The Friends of Hungerford

The "Friends of Hungerford Surgery" is an organisation, originally set up with its own committee, to be both a communication channel for patients and to help identify and develop ideas for improvement. It was also designed to be a focus for fund raising in order to provide items and services to the benefit of patient care.

Recent participation has declined although we firmly believe that our patients would like to have a say in how their surgery delivers healthcare services. We are looking for willing volunteers from the local community to join 'The Friends' and help improve the services we provide. It needn't be a huge commitment, an hour or two every 3-4 months would suffice and our Practice Manager Mike Hall would really like to hear from you if you are interested and would like further information.



Parking



Parking is usually an emotive subject and it is no different here at the Hungerford Surgery. May we remind patients that there are a limited number of parking bays in the car park we share with the health centre, particularly during peak hours. We would ask that you observe the following 'house rules':

- **Do not** park in the clearly marked disabled bay unless you have, and are able to display, a blue badge.
- Please respect the spaces reserved for doctors and the clearly marked no parking areas as we too often find that our GP's are blocked in and cannot get their cars out in times of emergency.
- Only park in the clearly marked bays.
- Only use the surgery / health centre car park when visiting either facility. Our car park should not be used when dropping off children to the nursery school or playgroup.
- Likewise, visitors to the surgery and / or health centre should not use the parking facilities of our neighbours in The Croft.
- Please take care at all times. Space and sight lines are often very restricted and you are asked to be aware of pedestrians and other vehicles when entering or exiting the car park or simply manoeuvring in and out of spaces.
- Please ensure your valuables are kept out of sight at all times. Whilst you may only have a 5 minute appointment, car thieves will take every opportunity to steal your valuables if they are left on show.
- The Hungerford Surgery accepts no responsibility for loss or damage to cars parked in its car park or the contents thereof.

Thank you

Sticky eye – a common problem!

This is when your baby has a discharge from the eye and is most common in newborns during the first 24 hours after birth. Babies can pick up bacteria while passing through the birth canal. If you clean your baby's eyes regularly, it should clear up in a day or so and, if it doesn't, see your GP as it could be caused by something else such as a blocked tear duct.

In older babies and children, a sticky and red bloodshot eye is likely to be caused by **conjunctivitis**, a common bacterial or viral infection that affects the lining of the outer membrane of the eye and its lids - especially if both eyes are affected.

What you can do

- Bathe the affected eye with cooled, boiled water.
- Always use a clean piece of cotton wool for bathing each eye and wipe from the inner eyelid outwards.
- Keep a separate towel and flannel for your baby / child in case the discharge is being caused by an infection.
- If both eyes are or become infected or the condition doesn't clear up in a few days, see your GP.

Yet another survey!

In recent years we have conducted an annual patient survey called the General Practice Assessment Questionnaire (GPAQ)



and you can obtain a copy of our 2009 results from the surgery or by downloading a copy from our website. The good news is that the GPAQ survey is not now required on an annual basis but it has been replaced by an even more significant central government survey which may well be dropping through your letterbox at some stage.

We are very supportive of our patients having access to information regarding the performance of this practice provided the information is both accurate and relevant. The results from the most recent Government patient survey are now available on line but there is unfortunately considerable national controversy about them. The number of patients returning their forms has been very low and this has led to a feeling that the results are rather inaccurate. In our case, less than 2% of our patients took part in the most recent survey and we don't feel that this presents a totally accurate reflection of your views. A good analogy would be with elections – very low turnouts can lead to a feeling that the winning politician does not in fact have the backing of the majority of the electorate despite winning the election. Whilst we understand that you probably have had your fill of surveys we would be grateful for anyone being sent one of these taking the time to return it.

So how are we doing?

The Government Patient survey can be accessed on line at www.dh.gov.uk and is divided into the following 12 sections.

- **About your GP surgery**
- **Getting through on the phone**
- **Seeing a doctor**
- **Waiting time in the surgery**
- **Seeing the doctor you prefer**
- **Opening hours**
- **Seeing a doctor in the surgery**
- **Seeing a practice nurse in the surgery**
- **Your overall satisfaction**
- **Planning your care**
- **Out of hours care**
- **Some questions about yourself (demographic information)**

Notwithstanding the limitations of the survey as mentioned on page 3, we are pleased to note that the majority of respondents have rated the Hungerford Surgery as very good or good in the majority of sections. We also compare very favourably with both the national (UK) and local (West Berkshire) surgeries.

- For instance 84% of respondents said they were able to see a doctor the same day or within the next 2 weekdays when the surgery is open.
- Over 90% said that making contact on the phone was at least fairly easy.
- 81% of respondents tell us that they want to see a doctor of their choice and this is closely matched by 73% reporting that were able to see a preferred doctor. This would appear to vindicate our belief that patient's would like to see Hungerford GP's maintain personal lists.

However we never 'rest on our laurels' and the survey has highlighted a couple of areas in which we need to improve and / or better communicate with our patients.

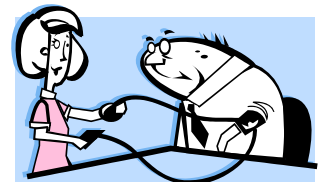
- Whilst 86% of all respondents said they wait less than 15 minutes to see a doctor or nurse after their appointment time, 20% of those feel that they wait too long.
- Whilst 80% of respondents are happy with our opening hours, 57% say they would like to see us open additional hours. Of those, 60% said they would like us to open on a Saturday and 32% said after 6:30pm.

Clearly an improvement in our communication is required here as we already extend our opening hours to offer routine appointments on one Saturday morning and one Monday evening per month. We also open early at 7.15am on several Tuesdays per month. Please ask at reception or check our website for details.

- 23% of respondents felt that other patients could easily overhear what was being said to the receptionist and whilst many patients value the open plan of the surgery, this is clearly an issue for some people. You are always welcome to ask for privacy if you don't wish to discuss an issue at reception and we are looking at ways in which we can make further improvements to patient confidentiality.
- We are concerned to note that 21% of respondents, with a long standing health problem, claim not to have had a discussion with a health professional in the last 12 months and we would encourage any patient to make an appointment to see their doctor if this applies to you.

Waiting Room Blood Pressure Monitor

Thanks to a donation from our Patient Group, the 'Friends of Hungerford', we have recently purchased and installed this new facility which allows patients to check their own blood pressure prior to an appointment with their GP or Practice Nurse.



A significant part of the donation was made in memory of Peter Benbow who sadly passed away in 2009. Peter gave great service to the community of Hungerford and we thank his family for their kind donation.

Blood pressure readings can be taken using either arm which is especially convenient for pregnant women, patients with back problems and patients in wheelchairs.

It is quick and straightforward to use with clear instructions provided. Results are automatically printed on thermal paper which can then be handed in to the GP or Practice Nurse. The slips can also be handed into reception for recording into your medical records although please note that our administration staff are unable to interpret or comment on the blood pressure results. Please ask at reception for further details.