

## Virtual PPG Feedback May 2021

### Agenda

- Patient Triage - we are soon going live with trialling online 'Patient Triage'. Patients will be able to go to our website, click on a link and submit any queries either medical or admin related and also seek online advice. The queries come directly to the surgery and are allocated to the appropriate staff member. Either admin/ reception for prescription queries or to the GP for medical queries. Patients can choose how they would like the practice to respond. For example, you can choose for text messaging, phone call or video call. It is a quicker way of contacting the practice in hope this will reduce traffic on the telephone lines.
  - Is this something as a patient you would use?
  - Would you prefer submitting an online form rather than telephoning the practice?
  - As this would be a new system, we are looking for patients that would be part of the first trial. We will be selecting a certain cohort of patients and texting them a link they can use to submit online queries via 'Patient Triage'. Once this is established we will then advertise on our website and incorporate all patients. Would you be interested in being part of the first cohort? If so, once we go live with the first phase, a text message will be sent to you. It would be useful if PPG members would sign up to this as you can then feedback to me directly from a patients point of view the pros and cons to the service, if it suits you, what can be improved etc.
  
- We have now released telephone appointments online and also pre-bookable appointments for patients upon contacting the surgery. You may be aware of new guidance as of the 17th May that advises GP practices need to:
  - Offer face-to-face consultations - we have continually throughout the pandemic offered face-to-face consultations. We triaged patients via the telephone however you as patients have had a choice of consultation mode. The only time we would not have been able to offer a face-to-face appointment would be due to COVID-19 symptoms. If you have any of the symptoms and require a face-to-face appointment, you will be booked into a local hub specific for Covid-19 symptoms.
  - All practice receptions should be open to patients, adhering to social distancing - our doors have been open throughout the pandemic. However if you have any Covid-19 symptoms, please do not attend the practice. Please contact the surgery by telephone.
  
- As of the 5th May 2021, our Primary Care Network (Crystal Peaks Medical Centre and 5 other practices), have vaccinated 23,488 patients. This is a huge achievement for practices in the area.

## **Feedback**

- P1 and P2 offered to be part of the Patient Triage trial once we are live. Advised as soon as we are live they will be sent a link to use when they have any medical queries. If they use Patient Triage they will then come back to us with any feedback.
- P3 advised she would always prefer to see the GP face-to-face, P3 feels you can get things across better during face-to-face consultations and can explain things better. P3 not keen on telephone consultations.
- P4 queried why we were still undertaking virtual PPG meetings considering the COVID restrictions will be lifted on the 21<sup>st</sup> June. P4 was advised that the reason we have undertaken a virtual PPG at this point is because we should carry out quarterly meetings which falls now however another reason is because we are hoping to go live with Patient Triage before the 21st June and we need volunteers. In addition to this, the virtual PPG has actually worked really well, unfortunately face-to-face meetings are hard to engage patients as they have other commitments. Of note guidance for social contact from the 21st June is that the government hopes to be in a position to remove all legal limits however these restrictions being lifted are all subject to the results of scientific Events Research Programme. As we move through these phases, the guidance is to still meet outdoors where we can and we must all remember that COVID-19 remains a part of our lives therefore if we can engage virtually to ensure safety of patients and staff for the time being, this is our main focus.
- P4 queried what the practice is putting in place for people who cannot afford the price of either a mobile phone or phone line to access on line services and who generally struggle with technology. P5 also raised concerns that some people may not be able to use technology. P4/ P5 were advised we are still offering telephone access and walking into the surgery to book appointments. We are hoping that by offering online availability to services this will reduce traffic on the phone lines and also reduce footfall into the surgery for patients who struggle with technology so it is easier for them to access us.

We know currently patients are struggling to get through to the practice on the telephones; we have more recently upgraded our telephone system to try and help alleviate the traffic but anything we can do to make the patient experience of contacting the surgery better is what we strive to achieve. We understand that some patients do struggle to access a telephone, for patients who are particularly vulnerable, if we are aware we would offer any help including referrals to community support workers who can help with financial issues or even contact us on behalf of the patient.

We have patients that have accessibility issues and have arrangements in place to accommodate these particular patients. P4 was also advised turning up to practice to book appointments will still always be available. We only release a certain number of

online slots and if these need to be taken by another patient who hasn't got access to online services, this slot will be used for them.

- P4 also raised concerns that patients will fall through the cracks if they cannot keep up to date with technology. P4 was advised our GP's work extremely hard in providing the best continual care they can. Often, these patients are on certain in-house registers so we can keep a tab on how they are and if anything needs chasing up etc. For example we have a learning disability register and these patients get called in for reviews annually with the GP and the nurse and a specific consultation is carried out to cater to their needs. This register (along with other registers) is reviewed by the GP Leads on a regular basis. The way of booking the appointment is done in a way that is best suited to that particular patient as we are aware of any needs they have, they are also accommodated with which member of staff they see, if they need to wait in another room rather than the waiting room, if they need to use another entrance etc. We also have 'NHS Health Checks' that are only offered to patients who do not have any long term conditions and who aren't on any medication and are between a certain age ensuring that if they haven't been seen for a long time we have reviewed them. In addition to this we also have offer 'Person Centred Care Planning', this is a register we build ourselves using risk scores dependent upon age and conditions. These patients are reviewed annually and we also add all patients over the age of 90 to this register and any patients with specific mental health problems to ensure we are continually making contact with them and ensuring their health needs are being met.

Contractually we have to have 25% of our practice population signed up to Online Services or have to offer 'Patient Triage'. We also have to think about the patients who are able to use technology fairly easy and some may in fact prefer this method. We are trying to offer more avenues of contact to the practice so patients can choose their preferred method. We understand Patient Triage and Online Services will not be suitable for all patients and therefore the usual contact methods of telephone and walking into the surgery will still be welcomed but if we can alleviate traffic on the telephones and make it less stressful for the patients trying to get through by other patients using technology we feel this is a good step.

- P5 happy to be part of trialling Patient Triage. P5 queried whether upon contacting the practice via Patient Triage, the reception staff would deal with medical queries. P5 assured that any medical/ clinical queries will be passed to the GP-on-Call.

**Next Meeting TBC**