

HEALTHY TIMES

The Newsletter for Faringdon's
White Horse Medical Practice

Autumn 2015



Welcome to our Autumn newsletter

Thanks for taking the time to read this newsletter. We hope that you find the content both interesting and useful. We are very grateful to our Patient Group for all their efforts in producing our regular newsletter.

It has been a very busy six months or so, post-merger. Everyone has worked very hard to try and ensure that our patients get the best service that we can possibly provide. We know that the building layout is not as convenient as it could be, but we have plans to improve this. We want to improve our reception, waiting area and dispensary and provide more consulting rooms for our Doctors and Nurses.

At the beginning of September we welcomed several new members of staff including Dr Anne Davies, who will be in the Practice four days a week. Julie Foster is our new Nurse, Karen Merritt joins the dispensary team and Mandy Scott joins our admin team.

At the end of October, Dr Liz Dickson will be leaving us. She has been commuting from Bristol one day a week and has helped us through our transition phase following the merger. We will be very sorry to see her go, but understand that she would like to work closer to home.

Read more opposite about our new telephone call-back appointment system. If you call and cannot book an on the day appointment, you will be put on a list for the duty GP to call you back. They aim to call you back within an hour. This means that patients are now being given the most appropriate advice, which might be an appointment with a doctor or nurse or healthcare assistant or it might be advice over the telephone.

We welcome your feedback on the content of this newsletter. If you have any ideas for topics you would like included in future editions please contact our Practice Manager, Caroline Beaney, or one of our Patient Group members.

Dr Anna Douglas, Dr Gavin Bartholomew, Dr Simon Cartwright

Health Centre phone number

Please remember always to use **01367 242 388** when ringing us. You will not be able to speak to us on the old Fern Hill number.

Are you at risk from flu?

The Surgery warns that the risk of serious complications from flu is higher for patients with underlying conditions such as Asthma, Cardiovascular diseases, Liver diseases, Diabetes and any weakened immune system conditions. Flu vaccine is the easiest and most effective way of preventing flu. It doesn't guarantee that you won't get it, but it reduces your risk of getting it and of developing serious, life-threatening complications. The jab is also very quick and surprisingly painless.

Flu vaccination is effective and free so please book now on 01367 242 388.

- Saturday 3rd October and 10th October from 8.30am until 12:30pm
- 5th October and 12th October from 5.30pm until 7:30pm
- 6th October and 7th October from 2.30pm until 5:30pm

Please phone or call into our Reception to make an appointment and do let the Receptionist know if you are in any of the at-risk groups.

Emergency appointments sorted!

One of the most trying aspects of managing a Surgery, both for patients and doctors, is when someone wants to be seen as an emergency. We keep up to a third of our regular appointments free for patients who phone first thing for a same-day appointment and used to have special five minute bookings twice a day to allow for short-notice consultations.

But it's the emergency calls that have been hardest to manage and, till recently, we were getting up to 50 requests every day for an emergency appointment. This was unfair on everyone so we have introduced a call-back system where, often within the hour, a duty doctor rings every single caller who has asked for an emergency appointment. We've found that the doctor can usually resolve the majority of those issues over the phone, or the patient can be seen in a day or two, or the local pharmacy can provide the necessary treat-

ment. Now we are able to devote proper time to the 10 or so patients who must be seen immediately and have saved around 40 people a day from making an extra trip to the Health Centre.

Full complement of doctors

Despite there being a national shortage of at least 10% of GPs we are delighted to welcome Doctor Anne Davies to Faringdon. Her appointment now means that we have the right number of doctors to match our greatly increased number of patients. We very much hope that you will find it easier to get an appointment with your regular* doctor at a convenient time and must apologise to those patients who had an extended wait over the summer when we were below strength for several weeks.

Dr Davies recently moved to Oxfordshire from South Wales and will be working full time at the Health Centre. Although we are sad that Dr Liz Dixon is stepping down from her practice here we are very grateful to her for having continued to travel from Bristol to help us over the transition as we merged with Fern Hill.

*Most of our doctors work full time but, if you often find it difficult to get a regular appointment with one of our part-time practitioners, please do speak to them about switching to a full-time colleague.

When will we sort our Reception area?

First, the senior doctors and admin staff would like to thank all our patients and visitors for having been so forbearing during the period since we merged with Fern Hill. We're confident that all the medical services worked perfectly during the transition and our admin has successfully absorbed an additional 40% patients. We've got a new clinical management system that is far superior, our website has had a much-needed refresh and some excellent new people have joined our team – now up to 55 staff, would you believe!

But, and it's a big but, we're not at all happy with the split Reception area and the lack of space for patients waiting to be seen. You may remember that we were hopeful of getting an NHS top-up grant for building work and we can finally say that we've completed the planning stages, hope to get NHS sign-off shortly and prepare for the builders some time in early 2016 – subject of course to Planning Permission. Yes, it would have been great to get on with the job faster but, with another 3-4,000 patients likely to be moving into the area, we've got to get the planning spot on if we're not going to have the same issues again within a couple of years.

So we ask all of you to be patient, keep an eye open for any short-term announcements or temporary closures and look forward, with us, to the completion of one of Oxfordshire's best-equipped Surgeries.

Creating a more dementia-friendly community

Emily Norton, one of our Patient Group members, has been checking out a very interesting new programme from the Alzheimer's Society. Called 'Dementia Friends', this initiative is designed to change people's perceptions of dementia. It aims to transform the way the nation thinks, acts and talks about this distressing condition.

Whether you attend a face-to-face Information Session or watch their online video, Dementia Friends is about learning more about dementia and the small ways you can help – from telling friends about the Dementia Friends programme to visiting someone you know living with dementia, every action counts.

Our own Dementia Friend, Emily, will be holding an Information Session on Oct 22nd between 5.00 and 6.30pm at the Faringdon Health Centre. Come and learn about dementia and the small things that you can do that make a difference in helping those living with dementia. Find out how you could do this with friends or your own family, at work, in our local shops or elsewhere around town or in your village. For further enquiries please ring Emily on 01367 870 665 or visit the dedicated website www.dementiafriends.org.uk where there is a short, informative video.

Faringdon maternity services research gets top level NHS attention

The Faringdon Patient Group's Maternity Research Project is continuing to generate interest and is to be presented to the head of the NHS's national maternity review. Marcus Laphorn, one of our members, will discuss the research with project leader Baroness Julia Cumberlege in October, together with a colleague from the Church Street Practice in Wantage.

The NHS recently announced that, "Baroness Julia Cumberlege is to lead a major review of maternity services which is set to modernise care for women and babies across the country. The programme of work will assess current maternity care provision and consider how services should be developed to meet the changing needs of women and babies." We hope our research makes a useful contribution to their report.

The Faringdon Patient Group are grateful to the Surgery for their positive participation in and support for this research which is also being entered for a national award for outstanding health research by Patient Groups like ours.

Clearer Website with more info

Our Surgery website has had a major make-over recently and you'll find plenty of new information as well as a neater layout and clearer links. Check us out at www.whmp.co.uk

where we hope you'll find that our website provides clear and concise help as it has been designed to make maximum use of the online patient electronic access now available, with the link for the Patient Access online services provided for ease of quick access. There's also a guide to the various additional methods of ordering repeat prescriptions. And an interesting new feature is a news feed on general health issues as well as NHS-specific topics.

We welcome any general comments you may have regarding our services or the content of the website. Please let us know your thoughts by contacting us via the website's comments and suggestions link.

New surgery register for carers

If you provide care and support to an adult friend or family member, you may be eligible for support from your local council. This support could include being offered money to pay for things that make caring easier. Or the local authority might offer practical support, such as arranging for someone to step in when you need a short break. It could also put you in touch with support groups so you have people to talk to.

The surgery is committed to offering support to carers and we keep a register of those patients who are carers or those who have a carer – though only with their consent. Please feel free to complete our Carer's Identification Form so that we can add you to our register. Just ask at Reception.

If you think you may be eligible for a grant the local authority requires the carer to complete a self-assessment questionnaire. These have to be done online, either in person at www.carersoxfordshire.org.uk/cms/content/carers-assessments or over the phone at 0845 050 7666 or 01865 323 002. Alternatively a home visit can be arranged.

Carers Oxfordshire

Come along to the Surgery on the first Wednesday of the month at 10.00 when Carers Oxfordshire visit for a couple of hours to provide advice and information.

New Hearing Clinic and Shingles jabs update

Hearing Clinic

We are delighted that we will have a monthly on-site Hearing Clinic starting in October/November. If your doctor agrees that you need to have a professional hearing test they will be able to refer you to our new free clinic where you can be properly assessed. The NHS is able to provide hearing aids if your hearing loss is sufficiently severe, or there are more elaborate aids available to buy.

If you are interested please make an appointment with your regular doctor to discuss your hearing and they will then make the necessary arrangements. You still have the option of taking up the free test offers available from Boots, Specsavers and other local specialists.

Shingles Jabs

From September 1 2015, the shingles vaccine will be offered routinely to people aged 70 and, as a catch up, to those aged 78. You become eligible for the vaccine on the first day of September 2015 after you've turned 70 or 78 and remain so until the last day of August 2016. If you wish to have this vaccination at the same time as your flu injection please ensure your appointment is with a Practice Nurse. In any case we will write to all patients who qualify for a vaccination at this time early in 2016.

Patients needed for treatment research

The Practice continues to expand its research activity. The team is currently recruiting patients in the following groups:

Chest or abdominal symptoms

The CANDID study is looking for patients over 35 years old who have a three week history or more of either chest or abdominal symptoms. The idea is to record their symptoms and follow them up for five years to see if anyone develops lung or bowel cancer. By looking back at their initial symptoms the researchers may be able to produce guidance on the likelihood of spotting cancer at an earlier stage.

Asthma

The FAST study is looking for any patients with asthma who have required treatment with steroid tablets in the last year. Volunteers from this group will be randomised to either usual care or to increase their preventer inhaler to 4 times the usual dose if their asthma gets worse again. By comparing the two groups researchers will be able to tell whether a fourfold increase in preventer medication can reduce the risks of hospitalisation.

Flu symptoms

The ALIC4E study is looking for patients to test out a flu treatment if they get symptoms of a flulike illness (temperature greater than 38° with sore throat, blocked nose or cough). Patients need to be seen within 72 hours of the start of the illness and will be randomised to receive either the anti-viral agent Oseltamivir or to usual care with paracetamol, fluids and rest.

All these studies take place at The White Horse Medical Practice and do not require any visits to hospital. If you are interested in taking part in any of the studies then please mention this when you speak to your GP.

On-line services and Wi-Fi

Free Wi-Fi

We expect many of our patients will be delighted to hear that not only do we now have free Wi-Fi in both Reception areas but that there are no longer any restrictions on using phones or tablets on the premises so long as they are switched to silent. If you need to make a phone call please go into the foyer or outside so as not to disturb our staff or other patients.

Simply select our OXON-NHS-GUEST in-house system from your on-screen list of available Wi-Fi connections, click the ? query icon and then the 'Accept' button on the Wi-Fi agreement screen and you're connected. We do need to stress though that this is an unsecured service, with connections made at your own risk.

Online Prescriptions and appointments

Many of our patients are enjoying the convenience of being able to book their next doctor's appointment using our easy-to-use online calendar screen. You can see what slots are available for your regular doctor and all our other doctors as well. Just choose the day and time that suits you best and the appointment is made.

Similarly you can book a repeat prescription using the same system. The doctor will need to confirm the request and then you just go to your regular pharmacy to collect the items.

You may want to check out your medical record as well on the same screen. This shows what data we have on your immunisations, allergies and acute medications so, if there's anything missing or out of date, you can let us know so your record is kept fully up-to-date.

To have access to these services, all you need to do is come to Reception with some form of identification and a note of your email address. You'll be sent a signing-up email with a link to the log-in screen. The service is fully secure and no-one outside the Surgery can access your information.

Are you having trouble logging-on?

A few patients who first signed up with our previous on-line bookings system have been having problems logging on. This is usually because the web address is different but their browser is still trying to access the old one. Please check that you are connecting to the <https://patient.emisaccess.co.uk/> website. Give us a ring if you're still having problems.

Faringdon's new Advice Café

Need help with looking after your mother? Wondering about taking your pension early? Plagued with damp that your landlord won't fix? We all need some help sometimes to deal with life's unwelcome surprises. That's why a group of charities have opened The Advice Café beside the new Quad coffee shop in Faringdon's old Barclays Bank.

You can go to the Advice Café when you have a problem that you are struggling to deal with on your own. Maybe you just need a leaflet, or perhaps you need to sit down and talk to an expert in a private place. Everything you tell us is confidential and our advice is FREE. And at the Café you can log on to our computer and search for help online. Or, use our free telephone to talk to advice help-lines or make appointments to meet an adviser in a private space at the Café. There are also lots of leaflets available on every imaginable subject.

It is better to make an appointment to avoid having to wait but, if you drop-in on Monday or Wednesday mornings, someone will do their best to help you. To make an appointment call:

- Citizens Advice 03444 111 444
- Independent Advice Centre, Wantage 01235 765 348
- Oxfordshire MIND 01865 24 77 88
- South & Vale Carers 01235 838 554

The Quad Coffee shop is open seven days a week at 14 Market Place, Faringdon, SN7 7HP. 01367 602 009

Useful Info

- The regular Dementia/Memory Support Group Cafe is on the 2nd Tuesday of each month at the Health Centre from 10.30 to 12.00 – for carers and those they care for. Contact Clare Abolins of the Alzheimer's Society 07540 921 040 for more info.
- Community coffee mornings, open to all on Wednesdays 9.30-11.45 at the Pump House Project, Swan Lane.
- Community singing group, Wednesdays 11.45 to 12.45 also at the Pump House.
- Electric blanket safety checks – for more information call 01865 815 000 ext.4

The Patient Participation Group and White Horse Medical Practice take great care to ensure that information in this newsletter is accurate, however we advise patients to check any external contacts or sources themselves to confirm the details.

White Horse Medical Practice

Faringdon Medical Centre, Volunteer Way, Faringdon SN7 7YU
01367 242 388 www.whmp.co.uk

PPG The Faringdon Patient Participation Group works with the Practice to improve local health services and patients' knowledge of them. If you would like more info on anything in this newsletter or to join the Group, please contact us, either through www.whitehorsepracticeppg.org.uk or by asking at the Medical Centre.