



## Patient Participation Group (PPG)

### Newsletter No. 3 - February 2021

Welcome to the latest newsletter.

During the ongoing Covid 19 pandemic the PPG has continued to function in the background and while face to face meetings have not been possible, we have adapted to video conferencing. We have had several meetings with representatives of Cirencester Health Group (CHG) where we have been able to learn about the Surgeries response and plans; and make appropriate representations and suggestions on behalf of all patients.

#### **Covid Vaccination Programme**

As this Newsletter is being prepared the vaccination process is ongoing with all over 70s having been contacted and invited to receive their 'jab'. Our surgery has joined with the other doctors in and around Cirencester (South Cotswold Primary Care Network) setting up and running a vaccination centre based in Cirencester Hospital. It is important to understand that it is the GP Group giving the vaccines, not the Hospital; not always understood by those saying thank you on Facebook! The Centre has operated very well but you will receive whichever vaccine is available at the time of your appointment. Thank you to all involved including the volunteers working to help things run smoothly for us.

If you have been invited to book an appointment but have not done so, it is in your best interest do so as soon possible. If you have decided that the 'jab' is not for you, that is your decision, and we would ask you to rethink but please tell the surgery of your choice so that they do not keep chasing you to have it.

Over 65s are next on the list with other Groups following based on current Government guidance.

#### **Flu vaccinations**

During the Autumn, the flu vaccine was available to those who qualified and as the numbers this time were greater than before our surgery opted to run a drive through vaccination centre based on the car park at Cirencester College, in addition to other clinics based on surgery premises. The venue for the drive through was a last-minute change imposed from on high, but the process worked well with no major problems encountered. We suspect that this model will be used again in the future for 'mass' vaccinations.

#### **Surgery remains open.**

The surgery continues to function for all other matters as best it can under current guidance. An 'eConsult' form has been introduced via the Practice Website which has been widely used with generally good patient outcomes. The surgery is committed to responding to clinical queries by the end of the next working day, but admin e-consult replies will take longer (3-5 days). All GPs in the Surgery set aside time each day to work through these forms. Please do use this method to seek help if you can but we all recognise that not everyone has access to or is comfortable in using computers and smart phones, so initial phone calls are still acceptable. Expect a response to be via an e-mail or phone call but a video call or face to face appointment will be made as appropriate. If you are asked to come to the surgery to see a doctor or nurse please ensure you know which of our two locations you are expected to go to as all staff now move between locations, so it is possible to see your usual doctor or nurse but at the other site!

Remember the surgery is open so if you have concerns about your health please do come forward and seek help.

## **Social Prescribing**

Kim Hill (GRCC) has joined CHG as our new Social Prescriber. Louise Fletcher of Gloucestershire Rural Community Council has sent us the following summary of Social Prescribing.

The Community Wellbeing Service in the Cotswold district is open to anyone who is aged 16 or over and living in the Cotswolds or registered with a Cotswold GP. The aim for our team of Social Prescribers is to help improve health and wellbeing of individuals and communities. A variety of things affect people's wellbeing, for example: housing; finance; mental health; feeling isolated and emotional wellbeing. We offer support, information and guidance on many topics for carers and local groups.

We accept self-referrals and referrals from community groups, friends, family, neighbours, GP or health professionals.

To get in contact for queries or referrals, please call 07738 106384 or email [cws.grcc@nhs.net](mailto:cws.grcc@nhs.net).

For more information, please visit the website: <https://www.grcc.org.uk/individuals-and-families/community-wellbeing-service>

A Case Study demonstrating how we can help. A gentleman in his 80s was referred to us as he was missing his late wife. Since she had passed, he became very withdrawn from the social activities they used to take part in and the friends they would see there. He told the Social Prescriber he would really like to go back to these groups, but it felt like betrayal to go without his wife. He had also lost confidence as he hadn't gone for a long time. The Social Prescriber suggested some grief counselling as this could help with the feeling of betrayal and help to work through the stages of grief that everyone faces. The Social Prescriber also gave him tips to improve his confidence and, when he felt ready, accompanied him a few times to return to the social activities until he felt more comfortable.

## **Other PPG News**

One of the casualties of our current situation is the leaflet 'Poems in the Waiting Room'. Sadly, the publishers have ceased trading. Thank you to Gill Scott and Siân Gardner (PPG Members) who made these poems available for us.

## **PPG Membership**

The main aim of the PPG is to provide a two-way flow of information between CHG and its patients, and so improve the *'patient experience'*. All CHG patients are eligible to join and all patients can raise with the PPG any matters of concern at any time (except personal complaints which must be addressed to the practice management). The number of members at formal meetings is limited to about 16-20, but to overcome this limitation, a *'virtual PPG'* has been established to enable a wider cross-section of patients to be involved. Currently, meetings are held virtually via 'Zoom' as and when needed, but it is hoped that physical meetings will be resumed eventually using one of the conference rooms in the hospital. Meetings are normally held on the second or third Thursday of alternate months. More information is available on the website: <https://cirencesterhealthgroup.co.uk/practice-information/patient-participation-group/>.

## **And Finally**

We owe a great deal to the Surgery staff for continuing to work through these difficult times. Several staff have contracted the virus and been off work for some time, which has increased the strain on everyone. Thank you all for what you have done. We appreciate your dedication.