

# Patients matter June 2015

Welcome to the latest edition of Cannington Health Centre's patient newsletter

## Need a copy in bigger print? Ask at reception

### 'Patient Access'

This is the term used for the system whereby patients can get on-line access to

- View and order medication
- View some of their medical record
- Book and cancel appointments on line

Since we launched the system in February this year, an amazing 1357 patients have signed up. Some have had a little difficulty setting up their account due to a national problem with the website but generally feedback has been positive. To sign up, come to reception with some photo i.d. For confidentiality reasons, we need to verify your identity before we can issue you with the information you need to set up your account. **Patient Access** does give the user access to personal medical information. It's fairly basic information at the moment but could expand to your full medical record so it's important we check your identity from the start. If it's absolutely impossible for you to get into the health centre with your i.d., please give us a call. We do have a process which will give you access.

It's for confidentiality reasons that we can't allow **Patient Access** for parents on behalf of their children. We recognise that this is not helpful for busy parents trying to manage their children's medication and are hoping for some national guidance that will improve the situation.

At the moment we are not offering on line appointments but we plan to do so in the near future. It will probably require a separate log in but not the identity checks needed for **Patient Access**.

We will only be offering a limited selection of appointments for on line booking but it does mean you will be able to make your booking or cancel an appointment at any time night or day

### Travel vaccinations

At this time of year, thoughts turn to foreign holidays which may mean vaccinations. Please contact us at least 8 weeks before you travel to ensure that you can get the protection you need. If you book a last minute holiday we will try to accommodate you but may not be able to offer you an appointment to suit.

### Letters for schools and exam boards

Another feature of this time of year. We are often asked for a letter by a school or college to confirm that a student was unwell during the exam period so that they can apply to the exam board for special consideration. Often exam boards do not require a doctor's letter but if they do, this constitutes a private service and there will be a charge for the letter. We may also need to obtain written consent from the student.

Similarly, GPs have no obligation to provide sickness certificates to prove to a school that a student's absence was genuine. A refusal to provide a certificate is in line with Government policy to reduce GP paperwork and preserve valuable GP time for clinical care.

### Change in service providers

As part of the marketization of the NHS, several services which were provided by GP practices are now commissioned from other providers.

### Smoking service - contact

[www.smokefreelivesomerset.co.uk](http://www.smokefreelivesomerset.co.uk)

0800 246 1063

### NHS healthchecks

If you are aged 40-74, don't already have heart problems, high blood pressure, diabetes, raised cholesterol, diabetes or kidney disease and haven't had an NHS healthcheck in the last 5 years, you are entitled to a free healthcheck. The health checks are carried out at certain GP practices (not here) and pharmacies throughout Somerset. To find out more call 01823 261 794 or go to

[www.somersethealthchecks.co.uk](http://www.somersethealthchecks.co.uk)

### Prescription charges

The vast majority of people are exempt from prescription charges. A small number of people, knowingly or unknowingly, are claiming exemption to which they are not entitled. It's estimated that in the year 2012/13, prescription fraud cost the NHS £217 million. For this reason we have tightened up our procedures and are asking to see evidence of exemption (except when it is age exemption). Most patients will have an exemption or prepayment card and we need to see that every time please. There are a few situations where patients won't have a card in which case we will need to see a recent letter from the benefit agency.

If you believe that you are exempt but aren't sure why, we may ask you to pay for your medication but issue you with a receipt which will get you a refund (from a pharmacy - unfortunately we are not able to give the refund) if you can later provide evidence of exemption.

The current prescription charge is £8.20 per item.

If you have to pay for medication and it might be cheaper for you to purchase a prepayment card. This costs £29.10 for 3 months or £104.00 for 12 months and represents really good value. If you have on average more than 1 item on prescription a month, then you will save money by having a prepayment card. There is no upper limit on the number of items covered. Ring 0300 330 1341 or go to [www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/ppc](http://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/ppc)

Students age 19 and over are one group of people who mistakenly think they are automatically exempt from prescription charges. They should complete form HC1 'Claim for help with health costs' (we can provide this) as they may be eligible through the NHS Low Income Scheme. Ring 0300 330 1343 for more information.

## **Other Changes coming**

### **Electronic Prescribing (EPS)**

This is a new system coming to the area later in the year which may simplify things for our non-dispensing patients (our patients who have to get their medicines from a pharmacy, not from our dispensary). It cuts out the need for a paper prescription to get to the pharmacist - the prescription goes electronically. Dispensing patients (most of you) have effectively had this system for years! Non-dispensing patients will have to nominate a pharmacy but there will be plenty of publicity when the time comes. We have heard reports of some pharmacies marketing themselves very aggressively by writing to all households in an area suggesting that patients nominate them as their preferred pharmacy. Dispensing patients - you need do nothing. Non-dispensing patients - you may wish to nominate that pharmacy but it is entirely your choice (just don't keep changing because that gets complicated).

### **Patient recall**

Many patients have a long term health condition such as diabetes which needs an annual review. We are starting to use a new system to recall patients for these reviews. We believe this will streamline the process and make it more efficient but we will be moving towards inviting patients in or around the month of their birthday. This means that for this year, many patients will get their checks a bit sooner or later than expected but we hope that in a year's time we will be back on track.

## **Welcome to**

### **Isabelle Ava**

Many of you will remember Dr Katie Allen who started maternity leave in March. We're pleased to announce that she had a little girl on 27 April. Mother and baby are doing very well and we can't wait to see them.

### **Dr Craig Bobbett**

Dr Katie Allen was a GP registrar, that is a qualified doctor undertaking further training to become a GP. We're hoping she will return to complete her training after her maternity leave. In August we will have a new registrar starting, Dr Craig Bobbett. He has already spent a few days in practice here so some of you may already have met him and we are looking forward to having him here for his final year of GP training.

## **Our new staff members**

Receptionists Kirsty and Lorna. Please be patient whilst they are training.

Assistant practice manager Carol Woodward, covering Sarah's maternity leave.

## **Building works at the Health Centre**

In the near future we will be carrying out some minor works here to

- Improve access for people with mobility problems
- Repair damage to the front porch

Both are likely to cause disruption. We will do our best to minimise the disruption but safety has to be our chief consideration and it may mean that we have to bring patients into the health centre through a different entrance

## **Patient group**

We are keen for as many patients as possible to be involved in the patient group. As well as the core group which meets every two months or so, we have an on-line group. We send information to the on-line group (including this newsletter) and consult with them from time to time about various issues. If you would like to join this group, follow the links on our website

[www.cannington.gpsurgery.net](http://www.cannington.gpsurgery.net)

## **Friends and family test feedback (FFT)**

Thank you to those people who have completed our FFT feedback form since we introduced it in October last year. Perhaps predictably numbers have dropped off significantly since then. Also, although the comments are overwhelmingly positive, the proportion of negative comments has increased as the number of responses has reduced.

We are grateful for the positive comments and would encourage everyone to complete a FFT slip at every visit. There are forms in the waiting room and at the dispensary hatch or you can go to the practice website and complete the form on line.

We don't just ignore the negative comments either but because the forms are anonymous, it can be difficult to follow them up.

The patient participation group sees a summary of the results and **all** negative comments. Most but not all people find our receptionists friendly and helpful but in response to some negative comments we have arranged 'Exceptional customer service' training for staff in June. We are also aware that there may be a long wait to see your GP of choice and that some GPs can run very late. We understand the frustrations that these problems cause but they are rather more difficult to resolve. We will keep you informed of any progress.

In the meantime, if you do have a complaint about the practice or a suggestion to make please contact the practice manager, Moira Allen. There is also a patient feedback link on our website

*The next edition of the practice newsletter will be in September. In the meantime we hope you have an enjoyable summer. Remember to stay safe in the sun and take suitable precautions if there is a heatwave!*