

Dr M H Darch & Partners

at

TOTTON HEALTH CENTRE

Newsletter Spring 2009

Dr M H Darch - Senior Partner

**Dr S J Godfrey Dr C G Alveyn Dr S P Gaunt Dr M A Falle
Dr H J Fleet Dr C E M Johnson Dr D T Booth**

Mrs I S Pilgrim (Business Partner)

Associate Doctors: Dr H Everitt

With the inclement winter weather behind us, we are looking forward to the challenges of the next few months in the practice. As well as the ongoing need to provide good quality health care to our patients through our doctors and nurses, we face more and more pressure from the increased expectations of the public and by the government to make sure our service is efficient, 'fit for purpose' and responsive to individuals that may require varying levels of support , help and encouragement.

In our bi-annual newsletter we will try to give you all the information about the practice and the services we offer. Increasingly your feedback is being sought about our service – sometimes in the form of government questionnaires, other times from feedback forms from the practice. Our service will be shaped by your responses to these questions – so please spend a couple of minutes filling in these forms and returning them. How you respond to these government questionnaires will affect the resources we have to deliver care to you and your family in the forthcoming years. Positive feedback can be channelled into providing better services!

www.tottonhealthcentre.co.uk

Tel: 023 80 865051

The Retirement of Dr Malcolm Darch

Sadly, after 29 years at Totton Health Centre our senior partner, Dr Malcolm Darch, is retiring on 9th May, 2009.

Malcolm has been instrumental in leading the practice over the past few years through changes in the way the practice is organised, involved tirelessly in gathering data for government targets and trying to work out how best to help the practice run in an efficient and cohesive manner. In his quiet, yet dedicated way, he has never lost sight of the fact that general practice is there to provide a personalised and supportive role for his patients. Despite the rapidly changing nature of general practice, he has always taken on new tasks to the best of his ability and worked hard – often late into the evening at the surgery as well as at weekends – to try to embrace these changes and see how they may best benefit you as patients and our practice as a whole.

He will be sadly missed by all the team in the practice, by the broader primary care teams in Totton and also by the many patients whom he has helped over the years. We will miss his warmth and sense of humour, his humility and boundless energy.

We would like to wish Malcolm and his wife, Claire, a long, enjoyable and well earned retirement full of new adventures.

From May 10th, we will be known as Dr Godfrey and Partners. Our list will remain open and we will be pleased to welcome all new patients who would like to register with us.

We are delighted to announce that a new Partner, Dr. Andrew Powell will be joining the practice in May to replace Malcolm. We look forward to welcoming him into the practice.

A Farewell Message Book will be gifted to Malcolm when he retires. Patients will, therefore, have an opportunity to express their best wishes to Dr. Darch. If you would like to have a message inserted into the book, please ask at Reception for a slip to write on.

Longer Surgery Hours

DON'T FORGET - we offer a selection of [early morning](#), [late evening](#) and [Saturday morning](#) surgeries.

It is hoped that the wider range of appointment times – which are pre-bookable **TWO WEEKS** in advance - will make our service more accessible for certain groups of patients, particularly those who find coming to the surgery during the working week more difficult.

Better services
Early mornings
Late evenings
Saturday mornings

New Zealand Sabbatical 2008

As many of my patients will know, I undertook a period of sabbatical leave in New Zealand from mid-August 2008, returning to the UK just before Christmas.

After twelve years as a partner at THC I was keen to experience how other countries operate their healthcare systems; not to mention that it was also a good opportunity to have a change of scene for a few months! When the opportunity arose to work temporarily Down Under, my wife and I decided to take the plunge.

The journey to NZ is certainly a long one, but well worth the effort. The Land of the Long White Cloud – to give it its Maori name – lived up to its billing as one of the most scenic places on earth.

We were living on what was, in effect, a small farm in a very rural area, 15 miles west of Christchurch. There were six horses, five calves, two pigs and a few chickens to look after, not to mention a couple of cats and a very boisterous Alsatian. It was a very steep learning curve, as neither of us is from a farming background, but I am pleased to report that all the livestock survived in our care!

General practice was broadly similar in terms of the range of problems seen. However, patients have to pay for each consultation. I well remember my shock on first seeing that the top drawer of the surgery reception desk was a cash till!

Home visits are a rarity there – on my return, my colleagues were amazed to learn that I only did two visits in four months!

The town in which I was working was at the heart of a farming community, and there was a seemingly endless stream of Kiwi farmers coming through the door who had re-designed their hands with various power tools!! As the nearest hospital was many miles away, they invariably opted for having their wounds sewn up at the surgery; fortunately, most New Zealanders are tough and stoical people. Although I hadn't expected it to be put to such good use, I was certainly grateful for my minor surgery experience at Totton!

Returning to the UK in the depths of winter was a shock to the system, but as the weather improves and spring emerges, it's good to be home. I certainly look back though on our time in New Zealand with many fond memories.

If you ever get the chance to visit NZ, take the opportunity, it's well worth the trip.

Chris Alveyn

CURRENT SURGERY OPENING TIMES

Monday – Friday 8.30 am. – 6 pm.

(Except Monday lunchtime 1 pm - 2 pm.
when we are closed for staff training)

Emergency on call Doctor

available from 8 am. - 6.30 pm.

Home visit requests

please phone before 12 noon

Blood or other test results

please phone between 9.30 am. – 12.30 pm.

Repeat Prescriptions

require 48 hours to be processed. We do not accept prescription requests over the telephone unless the patient is infirm or elderly

PLEASE NOTE:

MEDICAL EMERGENCIES OCCURRING OUTSIDE OUR STANDARD WORKING HOURS CONTINUE TO BE DEALT WITH BY THE OUT OF HOURS SERVICE ON TELEPHONE NUMBER

0844 811 3060

Useful Health Websites

With increasing amounts of information accessible to the public, it is often difficult to know which websites offer reliable and patient-centred, sensible advice. Here are a few which you may find helpful :

Totton Health Centre details: www.tottonhealthcentre.co.uk

National guidance on promoting good health and preventing and treating ill health: www.nice.org.uk

Woman's health: www.menopausematters.co.uk

Cancer support: www.cancerbackup.org.uk

Arthritis support: www.arc.co.uk

Travel Information www.fitfortravel.co.uk



Minor Illness Management

Many conditions are self limiting and will get better on their own. Often, symptoms will resolve themselves after a few days and it may be that immediate medical attention is not necessary.

The GPs and Nurses at the practice are very happy to give advice over the phone. We will, of course, see you if we think that this is needed, or if there is doubt about a certain problem. However, a telephone consultation may be all that is required to give necessary reassurance and advice. This may save both you and the medical staff valuable time and leave appointments available for more urgent conditions.



The practice nurses run a clinic daily to help manage patients with relatively minor illnesses.

If in doubt, ask for TELEPHONE TRIAGE – it may save you time!

Women's Health

The UK has one of the worst levels of termination of pregnancy in Europe.

Teenage pregnancy in our area is relatively high.

We feel that access to contraception – and appropriate contraception is important. Some methods of contraception are more effective at preventing a pregnancy than others. If a 100 couples use condoms for a year, then approximately 12 – 15 pregnancies will ensue! Condoms are excellent (and very important!) at preventing the transmission of sexually transmitted diseases, but are not a guarantee against pregnancy.



Coils and implants are very effective at preventing pregnancies. They are easy to fit, do not require regular checkups and do not require you taking a pill every day – something that on occasions can be forgotten. They have very few problems and can be fitted at the surgery. If you are interested in learning more about these, please see your doctor to discuss.

Sexual health is important in anyone who is sexually active. Screening for Chlamydia can be done easily through the doctors' surgery; the highest risk groups for this disease are young adults, both men and women between the ages of 15 and 24 years. A simple urine test can be used for Chlamydia screening – just ask at reception or ask for a telephone consultation.

Health Centre Tips

To make the practice run more smoothly, there are often small items of information that are useful to know to help you access the service you require more efficiently.

- **Getting Test results from the surgery-9.30-12.30 daily**

Blood tests generally take 3 days to be analyzed.

X-ray results often take over 2 weeks to be reported back to the surgery.

Other hospital tests e.g. MRI or CT scans organised by the hospital are often sent separately to clinic letters and can take several weeks to get to the GP.

Please ring between 9.30 and 12.30 pm each day – if a doctor or nurse needs to speak to you directly, the receptionist will let you know.

- **Getting through to the practice on the telephone**

- **Avoid Monday mornings if possible!!**

Monday mornings are by far our busiest time.

Please do not telephone for a routine appointment on Monday mornings; telephone later in the day or, if you can, on another morning.

PLEASE DO NOT USE A 'RING BACK' FACILITY – our practice phone system does not recognise this and so will not work – you will only get irritated when we don't ring you back!

- **Travelling abroad?**

Book a telephone appointment with the travel nurse as soon as you know you are travelling, to check whether immunisations are needed or if travel advice is required.

- **Repeat Prescriptions**

Please will patients who are on more than one regular medication try to request all the drugs they need at the same time. If the medicines are 'out of step' with each other, please the Prescription Receptionist know; they can easily sort this problem out for you.

- **Blood Tests**

The demand for blood tests is increasing and, unfortunately, our part-time phlebotomist, Jackie, cannot do them all in the surgery. We try to keep her appointments for the elderly and those that have difficulty travelling. Blood tests can be done at Lymington Hospital or at Southampton General Hospital – details are on your blood test forms.

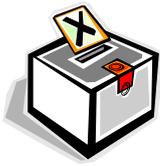
- **Hay fever prescriptions**

You do not need a doctor's appointment for your annual hay fever medication. If you have had the scripts before, please drop your written request into the surgery or discuss it with your doctor by booking a planned telephone consultation.

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Our Annual Patient Survey 2008



OVERALL SATISFACTION WITH THE PRACTICE - 83%

Each year our patients are asked to complete a questionnaire about the service and care that they received at the practice. Once again, we were encouraged by the results achieved; we scored higher than the national average in virtually every category. Patient expectations are, quite understandably, high and our survey results go some way to proving that we are making the very best endeavours to meet these demands.

The survey aims to question patients about their whole experience when making an appointment, getting seen by the doctor or nurse, the overall attitude of the staff and the responsiveness of the service we provide.

Particular areas where patients felt we did well are listed below:

Satisfaction with the availability of a particular doctor	81%
Satisfaction with the doctor involving the patient in decision making	86%
Satisfaction with the time the doctor spent with the patient	84%
Satisfaction with the doctors caring and concern	88%
Satisfaction with nurses thoroughness	92%
Overall satisfaction with the nursing team	91%

There is always room for improvement and we are aware of this.

Our main aims this year are as follows

- Improving patient awareness of extended hours surgeries being offered
- Continuing to seek ways of improving the telephone system and telephone access for patients
- Continuing to monitor and maintain patient access i.e number of appointments, type of appointments

Thank you to everyone who took the time and trouble to complete the questionnaire. It has certainly been helpful in reinforcing the message that, as a primary care team, the service and care we provide is generally appreciated and thought to be of a high standard.

You have our assurance that we will continue to review our service to ensure we maintain that high standard.

Practice Based Commissioning

The three practices in Totton have been working alongside the Primary Care Trust in monitoring our current services to patients and looking at ways of making improvements. In some cases, new services have been created. Here are a few of the changes that have been made in the last few months.

- **Diabetes** – More diabetic patients now have their care in the community with specialist nurse support and greater training in general practice.
- **Dermatology** – Practices now carry out more diagnosis and care of certain skin conditions in the surgery. Each practice has developed their own ‘in-house’ specialist and use specialist equipment to help them.
- **Nursing Homes** – A team has been developed with a specialist doctor and nurse who offer additional and specific support to the nursing homes. This means that patients are more likely to remain and be appropriately managed in the nursing homes, rather than be admitted to hospital.
- **Ophthalmology** – Work is underway on plans enabling patients to be referred more efficiently to the eye specialists directly from their opticians for glaucoma and cataract review.
- **Locality Community Care** – We have worked alongside care services enabling a more unified means of access to district nursing and social care. A community matron offers specialist support to specific patients requiring intensive input, minimising the need for costly and sometimes inappropriate hospital admission.

We are continuing to look at the services we offer, reflect on patient pathways that currently exist and seek to make changes and improvements that will benefit you as Totton patients. This is an ongoing process and we hope to bring you further details as they become available.

Patients views and comments?

Ideas

Comments

Brainwaves

Compliments

If you have any constructive comments that may help us improve our service – please let us know by either writing to us or completing one of the “Comments” Slips provided in the surgery. We will be receptive to all your comments and suggestions; they will help us shape our services in the future.

Thank you

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