

Newsletter

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Issue 13

Practice News

Since the last Newsletter there have been quite a few developments which have affected the Railway Medical Group.

Firstly, as you are all no doubt aware, the neighbouring GP practice **Collingwood Medical Group has closed**. The organisation that owned this practice (Northumberland Primary Care) announced in June 2018 that due to a combination of lack of GPs and financial pressures, they were closing the practice from the 30th November 2018. The closure of Collingwood Medical Group has resulted in a large proportion of their patients registering with Railway Medical Group.

Our GP Partners have openly written to both NHS England and Northumberland Clinical Commissioning Group expressing their concern at the impact of the closure on the existing patients of this practice. To date we have currently registered 2,700 new patients from Collingwood. We are all working actively to cope with the obvious impact of this.

To help the practice meet the needs of both its existing patients and the large number of additional patients, we have undertaken a significant recruitment drive. We have two additional GPs joining the practice in January and February. Additionally, two highly experienced and qualified clinicians, Shaun Hetherington and Lesley McVittie, Advanced Nurse Practitioners (ANPs) both started at the practice in the last three months. (There is a separate article in this Newsletter detailing their roles and describing the full range of clinical conditions that these clinicians will deal with.) They will be able to make a significant contribution to the professional team, working to offer the best possible care for our patients.

PRACTICE OPENING HOURS:

- ❖ **MAIN DOORS AT GATACRE STREET ARE OPEN FROM 08:00-18:30 - Monday to Friday;**
 - ❖ **Saturday morning's 10:00-12:00 appointments only.**
 - ❖ **Appointments available 08:10-17:50 (GPs); some nurses available to 18:00. Telephone consultations can now also be booked in advance.**
 - ❖ **The Reception is open and manned but there is no clinical cover between 12:30-13:30.**
- MAIN TELEPHONE NUMBER: 01670 542630 AND 01670 355080. Telephone lines are open from 08:00-18:30, Monday to Friday – (includes prescription line option - available from 09:30-12:00 and 13:30-16:00)**
- ❖ **OUT OF HOURS PHONE: for Medical Emergency 999; for routine medical assistance 111.**

Practice News

(contd)

Addressing the challenges for the future

- ❖ **Advanced Nurse Practitioners**
 - ❖ **Occupational Therapists**
 - ❖ **Additional appointments and using on-line services**
 - ❖ **Blyth Acute Service**
 - ❖ **Telephone consultations**
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In October we also recruited two Orthopedic Practitioners (OP) – Rob Tyer and Helen Robson who joined the practice as part of an initial six month trial for this service. They are able to see patients with Musculoskeletal (MSK) injuries/conditions.

The practice now has such a wide range of clinicians it is important that the medical receptionists ask patients some personal questions relating to the nature of their ailments. This is to ensure that patients are able to see the most appropriate clinician –this can be a GP, an Advanced Nurse Practitioner or an Orthopedic Practitioner. All our reception staff are professional and confidential, and arrangements can be made to speak to someone away from the main desk, if you require privacy.

As another effort to help support the additional demands on the practice, we have recruited three new reception staff. **This means that at 08:00 when the practice and its telephone lines open we usually have 8 staff just answering patient phone calls.** Our telephone system accurately tells you what position you are in on the telephone queue. We appreciate that it may seem daunting if on a Monday morning you are caller number 30 in the phone queue – however, on a typical Monday the reception staff have answered 90 phone calls within the first half an hour – with **the average time the patient has been waiting on the phone 5 mins.** This is not ideal but you will get through as quickly as is possible.

Blyth Acute Service This service was introduced in 2015. If you are unable to see a doctor on the same day and feel your condition **needs urgent attention**, you may be considered for a same day appointment at the **Blyth Acute Service**. This is located in the Blyth Hospital building and manned by two of our GPs and an ANP or nurse. This service has proven very successful. If you phone for an urgent appointment and there are no appointments that day, you can talk to a GP on the phone, who will determine your need and make a medical decision whether you need to be seen on the same day and by whom. You may then be allocated an appointment at Blyth Acute Service within the Blyth Hospital.

Telephone Consultations For those patients who would like to speak to a GP, but who don't feel it is urgent and they do not necessarily need to be seen or examined personally, **you can book a telephone appointment in advance in the same way you would book a face-to-face appointment.** This can be very helpful for a wide range of patients, eg. Those who work, for busy parents/carers and less mobile people. This appointment could also determine what is the most appropriate support or next step.

'Going On-line' As an alternative to phoning the practice for an appointment – a reminder, for those who can, why not use the internet/on-line services?

Every Saturday and Sunday a large number of appointments are released for on-line booking. Rather than trying to phone the practice at 0800 on Monday, you can book on-line over the weekend for a Monday appointment.

You can also order most medications/prescriptions on-line 24 hours a day.

Our Receptionists will be happy to help you to get set up on the internet to use the on-line Internet services. You just need to bring some identification with you to reception, and you can register straight away.

Meet the Team -

Meet the Team

The GP and professional team at Railway

We currently have 18 GPs to serve our patient community and care homes, currently 23,609 individuals.

Advanced Nurse Practitioners (ANPs)

The clinical team at Railway Medical

- 18 General Practitioners – some part-time
- 1 Clinical Pharmacist (until February)
- 2 Advanced Nurse Practitioners
- 2 Orthopedic practitioners
- 2 Pharmacy technicians
- 5 Health Care Assistants
- 5 Practice Nurses

Railway Medical Group has recently expanded its clinical team to include 2 Advanced Nurse Practitioners: **Shaun Hetherington** and **Lesley McVittie**.

What are Advanced Nurse Practitioners (ANPs) and what can they do for you?

Advanced Nurse Practitioners are highly experienced, professionally qualified members of the nursing care team who are able to assess, diagnose and treat your healthcare needs themselves, or refer you to an appropriate specialist.

Not every ailment requires the attention of a GP. There are several other options already available to you, including advice from the local pharmacist for minor issues such as colds, and sore throats, upset tums etc.

The main priority of most patients is that they receive timely reassurance and professional medical advice when they feel ill. They want to feel confident that when they really need a different level of medical attention, it is quickly identified and made available to them. We already benefit from the very successful Blyth Acute service and GP telephone appointments are also available to support patients. Our aim is always to maximise the effectiveness of GP and clinical resources available.

ANPs can take a comprehensive patient history, carry out physical examinations and use their expert knowledge and clinical judgement to make potential diagnoses. Shaun and Lesley are qualified to diagnose and carry out appropriate treatment, including the prescribing of medicines for many patients. They use their experience to plan and provide appropriate, competent care to meet the patient's health needs, involving other members of the health care team as needed.

It is hoped that the ANPs will help enhance capacity and capability already provided by the GPs by supporting the established clinical team. Shaun and Lesley are aiming to provide clinical continuity whilst providing high quality and safe patient-focused care.

Shaun and Lesley work within Blyth Acute Service and have the competence and skill to manage acute conditions.

Shaun will also carry out home visits, and has the ability and knowledge to make clinical decisions within the home for the benefit of the patient.

Lesley has come to the practice from mainly secondary care experience (hospital-based) but with a keen interest in ENT (Ear, Nose and Throat) conditions.

Meet the Team

Advanced Nurse Practitioners (ANPs) (contd.)

How can patients help?

- The ANP role works within very clear and established parameters, and this is where clarity is vital when booking appointments with Receptionists, giving enough information to ensure you are given the appropriate appointment.
- Nurse Practitioners are unable to sign Sick Notes, because it is a legal requirement that they are signed by a GP.
- Shaun and Lesley do not see children under 1 year of age.
- Pregnant females can be seen by the ANPs but they are unable to prescribe medication if you are pregnant. This is guidance from the Nursing and Midwifery Council which is designed to protect the unborn baby, so the ANPs may be able to make a diagnosis over a non-pregnancy related condition but would need a GP to write any prescription.

What does this mean for you as the patient?

- It is hoped that this additional resource will help reduce waiting lists for conditions that the ANPs can see. This in turn will free up more GP time to manage more complex individual patient-centered conditions.
- Shaun and Lesley provide a wealth of expert medical knowledge and experience and Railway Medical Group strongly believe that the addition of these two Advanced Nurse Practitioners to the clinical team will enhance the quality of service that is provided, for you, our patients.

Promoting Health

Promoting Health

In every issue we will highlight a particular health topic.

This issue covers:

Promoting Self-Help - Winter bugs

Promoting self-help – Winter bugs

Dr Smith has published a self-care booklet which is available in reception- Please pick up a copy if you are in the surgery.

Everyone knows of the pressures facing the NHS all over the country. Every GP practice has to deal with both increasing numbers of patients and patient demands, usually with the same or sometimes reduced resources.

Here at Railway, we all appreciate the effect of taking on large numbers of new patients, following the closure of Collingwood, with the ensuing need to recruit more staff resources. This is a particular challenge as it is acknowledged that there is a shortage of GPs available nationwide. This creates immense pressure on all staff and will continue until we have a full complement of staff and things have settled down.

You can help the GPs to help you when you really need them.

Sometimes visits to the GP for common ailments which can be dealt with elsewhere can clog up the system and reduce appointments available. Here are some self-help guidelines which may help you know what to do. The following has been used in a Newsletter before, but is especially relevant at this time of the year.

Promoting Health

Self-Help:

Winter bugs – Cold Viruses and Coughs

Coughs

Coughs are a very common problem and can be either acute (come on suddenly and last for 3-4 weeks due to an infection) or chronic (last several weeks and due to an underlying lung problem such as smoking/COPD).

Acute coughs occur more in the winter and the average adult will have 2 episodes of coughing every year with younger children experiencing up to 5 times a year or more.

Most acute coughs are due to viral illnesses, will last 3-4 weeks and do not require treatment from a GP.

When do you need to speak to/see GP?

- **If you have a high temperature over 38 c**
- **If you are coughing up blood**
- **If your cough is making you very short of breath**
- **If you have chest pain with your cough**
- **If your cough has lasted over 3-4 weeks particularly if you a smoker**
- **If you are experiencing a lot of wheezing**
- **If you have lost weight unexpectedly in the last few weeks preceding the cough**

What can you do to get yourself better?

- Try not to cough too much - our desire to cough can be influenced by our brain.
- Drink plenty of fluids.
- Some people find that cough lozenges soothe their cough. There is little evidence that cough medicines help the cough but some people find that they are soothing. However do not expect them to stop you coughing
- If you smoke, **STOP** smoking.

Health Information Events

Promoting Health – Health Information Events for Patients

In 2019, the PPG (Patient Participation Group) members, with the backing of the practice, plan to facilitate a series of health events for patients, their families, and friends in the Railway Medical Group waiting room.

It is hoped the first one can be held sometime in May.

The first event will be on **CPR (Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation)** and the use of portable defibrillators.

Many of you may have seen defibrillators on walls attached to buildings in public places. Currently, the only piece of CPR equipment for public use in Blyth is outside the South Beach Community Centre, but other local communities have funded equipment themselves – eg. Seaton Sluice has several. As this equipment can be a real life-saving aid, it might be a good project to fund more public equipment around the town. Although instructions are on the outside of the equipment, in an emergency people are often worried in case they do the wrong thing or use them inappropriately. CPR can save lives, but if you found yourself in a situation where a family member, a friend, or a member of the public collapsed and stopped breathing, would you know what to do?

Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation - CPR

An A & E Consultant has kindly agreed to come to the surgery to demonstrate use of CPR equipment and talk us through what to do in an emergency situation. Hopefully this will give us more confidence should we ever have to face a life or death situation.

When a date has been decided we will advertise the event by distributing flyers, and notices in the three practice waiting areas. We hope many of you will support us and come along. If this event is popular we hope to hold more health promotion events in the future.

It happened to me...

It could happen to you?

Peri-Anal Crohns Disease

A personal perspective from one of our patients

As a regular topic we include an anonymous article from one of our patients about their own very personal experience with an illness. This is their own experience, in their own words and not a professional view, but it might be of interest to help fellow sufferers or their carers.

It happened to me – PERI-ANAL CROHNS DISEASE

"In 2006 I started to feel unwell. I was tired and had very little appetite. I was constantly at the toilet with an urgent need. It got to the point where I was in pain when sitting, standing up and walking. I had sharp, shooting pains in my bottom, and believed that this was possibly due to piles.

I eventually became so poorly that I could stand the pain no longer so vent to my GP who examined me and said that it was possibly down to anal fissures. She prescribed cream to use and to go back if this didn't work. Well that happened several times, and I was at the point where I couldn't leave my bedroom and I was not eating or even leaving the house. My thoughts on this were, "If I didn't eat, I wouldn't need the toilet and therefore, wouldn't be in pain". This led to a dramatic and quick weight loss. So I was eventually referred to the hospital for an Endoscopy.

The day came for my appointment but as I was so very sore due to the abscesses in my anal area and the creams not working, the nurses/Drs could not complete the endoscopy, and explained that I would need to see a surgeon who would need to try and examine me further. The surgeon advised that I would need an exploratory examination the next day, under local anesthetic due to be being in too much pain to do this whilst still awake. I was told to attend the day surgery early the next morning, where I was taken into theatre and biopsies were taken and they drained all the abscesses keeping some open with little threads which they call "Setons". This procedure stops the abscesses from filling up again.

Within a week I was advised that I had Crohns Disease. I really didn't know much about this disease and was advised that I would need medication for life and that I would possibly have to have the 'Setons' in place for life if the abscesses did not heal. Which they didn't! After several years of trying various medications to control the Crohns, which I either had an allergy to or I had various other side effects, I am now on a self-injected medication which has worked well for me and has kept me relatively pain free for the last 2 years. The 'Setons' have to be changed every 1 to 2 years, for which I go in for day surgery. I have 3 monthly blood tests to check my inflammatory markers, as due to the Crohns and the medication I take, I now have a reduced immune system which means I am more prone to infections. Not ideal, but without all of this I would be very poorly, all of the time."

Did you know?

Our time is important too –

DNA - DID NOT ATTEND!

In the UK, more than 15 million general practice appointments are being wasted each year because patients fail to turn up and fail to warn surgeries that they will not be attending.

The total cost to the NHS is more than £216 million

D N A – Did Not Attend

Did you know that across the UK £216 million is wasted for the NHS each year by patients who fail to turn up for GPs, hospital and other health professionals appointments? Every year this amounts to 15.4 million wasted appointments. This money would pay for 2,325 full-time GPs or the annual salary of 8,424 full-time community nurses. (Taken from: England NHS UK: 2.1.19)

At Railway Medical the figure for the month of December was **351**

In these times when it is increasingly difficult to be able to offer enough appointments to meet demand, and when everyone is doing their best to ensure best patient care for all, it is very costly and frustrating when **patients who have appointments do not turn up and make no attempt to contact the surgery to say they cannot attend or no longer need to attend.**

Sometimes it is the case that the patient genuinely forgot or could have a medical reason for not remembering. Unfortunately, this is all too often not the case. Even by ringing on the day of the appointment to cancel can allow someone else to be offered the appointment or the GP to reschedule work.

Try to let us know: No-one will mind if you have to cancel, even at short notice. Every missed appointment costs the NHS (and ultimately the tax payer) money which could be used for treatments currently restricted, additional staff, more hip replacements, additional cancer and Alzheimer drugs, etc. Also releasing GP/Health Professionals time could reduce waiting times for appointments.

The quickest way to cancel an appointment is to telephone 01670 355080

FLUJABS

Have you had yours?

Flu Jabs

Surprisingly over 2160 patients eligible for flu jabs have not yet come along? Flu jabs are available to people over 65 and to other younger groups of patients considered vulnerable. These vaccinations can greatly improve your chances of not contracting the current flu virus or being less poorly.

It is important for all patients who have been invited to make an appointment or come along to an open session – one is planned for Saturday 2 February from 0830-1230.

The practice nurses and some members of the PPG will be on hand to offer coffee and a natter to encourage people to come out on a cold morning. If you have decided you do not want to be vaccinated, please let us know.

Did you know?

Signposting Local Support and Social Networking Activity Groups in the community

Keep active – keep well

It is widely-acknowledged that being able to socialise and meet other people contributes to good health and a general feeling of well-being. Why not start the New Year by taking up old and/or new activities which you can enjoy with others with similar interests? Try something completely new, meet a new circle of friends, get out of the house.

A wide range of activities are run by local community centres in Blyth and Seaton Sluice, either free of charge or for a modest cost. This can range from a drop-in coffee morning to :

- ✓ Children's activities
- ✓ Mother and Baby groups
- ✓ 'Silver Surfers'
- ✓ Tea Dances
- ✓ Exercise : Pilates, Dancercise, Yoga, Salsa, Tai Chi
- ✓ Holiday languages
- ✓ Local History Groups
- ✓ Craft and Art classes and groups
- ✓ Wood turning
- ✓ Camera Club
- ✓ Walking Groups
- ✓ IT drop in and teaching,
- ✓ Slimming classes, etc.

It is sometimes daunting to join something new, but you can be sure of a friendly welcome. Contact the following to get a full list of their activities.

Why Not Try:

- ✚ The Buffalo Centre, 55 Regent Street, Blyth.
- ✚ The Isabella Community Centre, Ogle Drive, Newsham.
- ✚ Briardene Community Centre, Briardale Road, Cowpen.
- ✚ Seaton Sluice Community Centre, Albert Road Seaton Sluice.

Recipe for Spring – Italian Stuffed Chicken

Italian Stuffed Chicken

- 4 chicken breast fillets, skinless
- 50g (2oz) sun-dried tomatoes, chopped
- 200g (7oz) ricotta cheese
- 15g (1/2oz) fresh basil leaves, roughly torn
- salt & freshly ground black pepper
- 8 slices of Parma ham
- roasted vegetables to serve

1. Preheat oven to 190°C/375°F/Gas 5. Mix together the sun-dried tomatoes, ricotta and basil (leaving a few leaves to garnish) in a bowl and season.
2. Cut a horizontal slit in the side of each chicken breast. Fill with ricotta mixture. Wrap each breast with 2 strips of Parma ham so that the joins are underneath and fix in place with cocktail sticks.
3. Put the stuffed chicken breasts on a baking tray and bake for 20-25 minute or until golden and cooked through.
4. Remove the cocktail sticks and slice in half. Serve with roasted vegetables and garnish with basil leaves.