



# Swallowfield Medical Practice Newsletter Autumn 2018



Welcome to the Autumn 2018 newsletter from Swallowfield Medical Practice.  
This newsletter is produced jointly by the Practice and the Patient Participation Group.  
Our aim is to improve communication and keep you informed.

## Flu Clinics 2018

Free vaccinations for patients aged 65 and over or those aged 18-64 years and in a clinical risk group:



**Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> September - 8.30am – 12 noon.**  
**and**  
**Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> October - 8.30am – 12 noon**

**There is no need to book an appointment – just turn up and get jabbed!**

There has been a slight change to the national flu immunisation guidelines for this year with 2 different vaccines available based on patient age.

Patients aged 65 and over will receive a trivalent vaccine which has shown to be more effective in this age group. Those under 65 and in a clinical risk group (Asthma, COPD, Diabetes, Heart Disease, pregnant or immunosuppressed) will receive the same vaccine as in previous years.

There will be additional flu clinics in November so don't panic if you're unable to make either of these 2 Saturday clinics.

Patients aged 6 months to 17 years and in a clinical risk group should contact the surgery to book an appointment with a practice nurse for their vaccination.

## Children's Flu Clinics

We will be holding separate clinics for children aged 2 and 3 years in November. Parents will be sent an invitation by text or email once dates have been arranged. If you haven't already registered your mobile number or email address now is the time to do it!

**465** appointments were missed between April and June. This equates to **77.50** hours of clinical time wasted - more than 2 weeks' worth of clinics.

**PLEASE, PLEASE** let us know if you cannot attend your appointment so that we can release it for someone who needs it.

We do send out appointment reminders by text – if you haven't registered for this and would like to please let reception have your mobile details. Please remember to keep us updated by completing the change of details form located on our website under 'Reception and Enquiries' or 'Administration Office'

Thank you.

## Extension Update

At long last the extension is complete! The builders left site mid July and we have been busy fitting the rooms out with couches, desks and other equipment so they are fit to use as clinical rooms. We hope you'll agree that the extra space is great! We now have 3 extra clinical rooms, a dedicated file storage room, a new meeting room and more office space. The dispensary area has also been modified to provide additional work and storage space.



Thank you to everyone for persevering through the disruption, dust and noise. Not forgetting a special thank you to Swallowfield Parish Council and Wayne and Dawn in the Crown for the use of their car park during this time.

## Staff Update

Last year we passed the inspection from the Deanery allowing us to become a training practice for GPs. We had our first registrars in August (some of you may have already seen them!) – Dr Ravpreet Kaur and Dr Charlotte Weston. Both doctors will be with us until early October when both will then start their maternity leave!

In October we have a new salaried GP starting – Dr Debbie Milligan. Dr Milligan is a very experienced GP and also works for Berkshire West CCG so we are very lucky to have enticed her to Swallowfield! Until Debbie starts we have a locum, Dr Moira MacDougall. Dr MacDougall is also an experienced local GP and knows the systems very well.

We are saying a sad farewell to 3 members of staff at the end of September: Bonny Croker, Fran Leafe and Beena Patel-Parker. Both Bonny and Fran have worked at Swallowfield for many years and all will be greatly missed by everyone. I'm sure you will join us in wishing them all well in their new ventures

## The changing world of Primary Care - Your GP Practice by Roberta Stewart

All over the country medical practices are changing. As always, their aim is to provide the best care possible for their patients but unfortunately, today, the level of resources available to practices has not kept pace with the demand. We are now living longer and as we age we are more likely to have multiple conditions and need more complicated treatments. This, combined with increasing administrative burdens on General Practice mean that we have to find new ways of working.

In this area the patient numbers are constantly increasing and this is likely to go on doing so for some time to come and as a practice, Swallowfield has to take on patients who reside within its practice boundary.

We all know that there is a serious lack of GPs and nurses now which will continue for the next ten years at least. General Practice is now seen as exhausting and under resourced so new doctors are often unenthusiastic about it. With the advent of 7 day working the already stretched workforce will be stretched even thinner.

In order to function and continue to provide a good level of service and care we have had to re-examine what the doctors do and what other trained healthcare professionals can provide.

At Swallowfield many of you will have already used the Nurse led Acute Illness clinic which has been very successful. A GP is always available as back up when needed.

The role of our receptionists is pivotal to the success of the new initiatives. In order to direct people to the appropriate health provider the partners have instructed the receptionists to ask a few questions so that they can direct you to the most appropriate clinician to help you. However, if this information needs to be kept personal you can say so.

There are other ways of contacting the practice. Footfall, our new interactive website, is an ideal example. You can use this if you have queries about referrals, sick notes or just need some advice. This saves you time coming to the practice and also doesn't take up an appointment with a GP. Using our online services to book an appointment and/or order your prescriptions also helps with efficiency both in reception and dispensary.

As patients we need to be as patient and understanding as possible to ensure that Swallowfield Medical Practice is able to continue offering us the best care as they have always done supported by our cooperation, understanding and encouragement.



### **Medical Dictionary - Vaccination**

A vaccination is a treatment which makes the body stronger against a particular infection. The vaccine is a substance which helps the immune system to fight infectious diseases.

## **Zero Tolerance** - Dr Will Beacham speaks out

The reception team do their utmost to provide all our patients with access to the healthcare they require, within an appropriate time scale. As your first point of contact with the practice, the reception team have a skilled and vital role to carry out, working closely with the Doctors and other healthcare professionals here. Our Receptionists are caring people who understand how anxious, poorly or in pain you may be feeling and want to assist, not to prevent you getting the right appointment.



The practice is coping with ever-increasing demands but patients are still getting seen, However, unfortunately there are some patients who do behave in a threatening and abusive manner towards our reception staff and this is totally unacceptable.

I would kindly ask patients to treat all the staff working here at the practice with the tolerance, patience and courtesy they deserve.

Please be aware that Swallowfield Medical Practice operates a Zero Tolerance of Abuse Policy and Procedure which is applied when necessary. You can ask to see a copy or view it on the practice website.

## **Red Alert - Prostate Cancer and Men's Illnesses** - Mike Hillier

Some of the top 10 have already been covered in previous newsletter articles such as heart and respiratory problems and Diabetes. Some issues are common to both men and women, with a few exclusively men's issues. Here are the top 10...

## **1. Heart disease**

"This is by far the leading cause of death in men over 50, typically caused by smoking, obesity, high blood pressure and raised cholesterol. Warning signs include discomfort or heaviness in the chest, palpitations or breathlessness, which – if left untreated – can lead to strokes or heart attacks. It's worth getting checked out at first sign of a heart problem, as there are plenty of medical interventions available to help prevent any life-threatening cardiac events."

## **2. Testicular cancer**

"Testicular is the most common cancer in men aged 20 to 35, with around 2,000 new diagnoses each year in the UK. Symptoms to watch out for are a painless lump in one testicle which is sometimes accompanied by a dull ache or heavy feeling in the scrotum. Concerning symptoms presented to a GP are cause for rapid referral (within 2 weeks) for further investigation."

## **3. Depression/suicide**

"Shockingly, suicide is the leading cause of death for young men aged 20-34, with four times more suicide deaths in men than women. Sadly, men are often more reluctant to discuss mental health than women, leading to less men seeking help. Over 70% of people who committed suicide between 2002-2012 had not sought any medical help in the year before preceding death."

## **4. Bowel cancer**

"Otherwise known as colon or rectal cancer, this is a common cancer especially in the over 60's. The key symptom to look out for is blood in the stools which is reason to seek immediate medical attention. Other symptoms can be subtle, such as change in bowel habits, and lower abdominal pain or discomfort. Risk factors are mainly lifestyle-related: obesity, drinking, smoking, diets rich in red or processed meats". The NHS currently run a screening programme for everyone over 60 and it has recently been announced that this will be changed to cover everyone over 50. Please do the test, it could save your life.

## **5. Diabetes**

"Rates of type 2 diabetes are soaring in the UK, in men, women and shockingly even children. Symptoms to look out for include increased thirst and urination, extreme fatigue and weight loss. Obesity, family history, high blood pressure and inactivity all increase your risk. Any man with any of these symptoms and risk factors should undergo blood testing for glucose levels and HbA1c (an indicator of longer-term glucose levels). The good news with type 2 diabetes is that it's potentially reversible with committed lifestyle changes such as diet improvements, exercise and weight loss."

## **6. Alcohol**

"Excess drinking can harm the body in a myriad of ways, from long-term liver damage, to short-term risky behaviour such as drink-driving. Even just moderate 'social drinking' can increase your chances of obesity, diabetes and cardiovascular disease. Try assessing your alcohol consumption by counting your weekly units – you may be shocked at the reality."

## **7. Prostate cancer**

"In the UK, 1 in 7 men will develop cancer of the prostate (the gland between the penis and bladder) in their lifetime. Symptoms are mainly regarding urinating: difficulty starting, increased frequency, and difficulty emptying the bladder. Often, the prostate enlarges naturally with age anyway, known as benign prostate enlargement, producing similar symptoms. To investigate this, your doctor can perform a blood test and a prostate exam"

## **8. Impotence**

"An embarrassing complaint to mention to a doctor, despite approximately 50% of men over 40 having experienced this to some degree. However, the inability to produce or maintain an erection (also known as erectile dysfunction) can be a sign of something more serious, such as heart disease or diabetes.

However, should no obvious medical cause for the problem be discovered on investigation, the solution may simply lie in a little blue pill..."

### **9. Skin cancer**

"Unfortunately, men are often slightly less health-aware than women, and with skin cancer, self-awareness is essential. Monitor your moles and check for the following:

- Change in size – including the appearance of a new mole
- Irregular shape
- Irregular colour
- Diameter of 7mm or more
- Inflammation
- Oozing
- Change in sensation (itchy or painful)

"If you're unable to keep track yourself, ask your partner for help – one reason why married men live longer than single men! Recently, Australian Olympic swimmer Mack Horton had a suspicious mole removed, not due to his own vigilance, but after a concerned spectator flagged it up."

### **10. Smoking**

"There is no denying the health risks associated with smoking: especially lung, mouth and throat cancers. Concerning symptoms include a cough lasting over three weeks, or coughing up blood. It's never too late to quit smoking though, with plenty of support available to those trying to quit."

So what's the problem that stands between where we are now and a massive improvement in the near future?

Well, the answer is contained in some of the accompanying comments to the threats to our health. A quick analysis shows us men in general drink, eat and smoke too much; and in general, many of us do not have a healthy lifestyle. Furthermore, we tend to ignore many simple, obvious symptoms which, if caught and diagnosed early, would lead to a complete and successful recovery. But, if left may ultimately kill us in our prime of life.

Finally, just to underline the point about early diagnosis of prostate cancer, I took this article from an article I read recently:-

"Every hour a man dies from prostate cancer. That's 10,900 deaths a year. In the next twelve months 44,000 men will be diagnosed with the disease. The number of men diagnosed per year has already overtaken the number for breast cancer. By 2030 prostate cancer is set to become the most common cancer overall in the UK. Like all cancers, early detection can save lives. A simple blood test is all that it takes. Look at the information on the Prostate Cancer UK website; it will give you everything you need to know. If you, or someone you know, is already one of the 400,000 sufferers, then why not join your local support group?"

I rest my case - it is up to us to improve these alarming statistics.

## **Becoming more physically active** by Sandy Smith and Jonathan Ruddle

Many of us needed to take things easy during the prolonged spell of extreme heat and now need to strengthen our muscles again and regain some basic fitness.

Most adults should aim for at least 30 minutes of physical activity on 5 days every week. If this seems daunting you could try dividing this up into three 10 minute sessions each day to help get you started again.

You don't need to join a gym or buy expensive equipment. Walking, housework and gardening are examples of physical activity that are easily accessible to most of us.

When first starting to increase your activity don't attempt to do too much, too soon. If in doubt ask a doctor or nurse for advice about what would work best for you.

Once you're feeling fitter, here are some examples of activities you can progress to which require moderate effort:

- Brisk walking – If you need to, try starting with short gentle walks then gradually lengthen your walks, quicken your pace and swing your arms to build up your fitness.
- Pushing a lawn mower
- Riding a bicycle on level ground
- Walking up and down flights of stairs
- Doing push-ups and sit-ups will help to strengthen muscles



Lots more ideas for becoming physically active are available on the [getberkshireactive.org](http://getberkshireactive.org) website. The site has a search option where you can enter your postcode and bring up a list of activities based on your own preferences.

Running requires more vigorous effort and can be a bit daunting if you've never done it before. If you can get to Hook a great way to start running is to join the successful 'ABC Absolute Beginners Course' which is run over 10 weeks by Hook Runners. If you are interested you can find out all about it at [www.hookrunners.com/abc](http://www.hookrunners.com/abc) or there are other running clubs nearby including Finch Coasters and Reading Road Runners.

## Did You Know These Facts?

- An ambulance call out costs a minimum of £223
- A visit to A&E costs at least £114
- A visit to your GP costs a minimum of £36
- A call to NHS 111 costs £12
- The cost of self-care is **FREE** - see our articles in previous newsletters

### Useful Numbers and Contact details

|                        |              |               |  |
|------------------------|--------------|---------------|--|
| Main Line              | 0118 9883134 | Appointments: | 0118 9883473   |
| 24hr Automated System: | 0118 9769606 | Dispensary:   | 0118 9883459   |
| Fax:                   | 0118 9885759 | Website:      | <a href="http://www.swallowfieldmedicalpractice.co.uk">www.swallowfieldmedicalpractice.co.uk</a> |