
THE CASTLE MEDICAL GROUP

Newsletter

Issue 2 -December 2001

New Appointment System

The Castle Medical Group is starting the New Year with a new resolution. "Do today's work today".

For a considerable period, the practice has been unhappy about the length of time that some patients are waiting to see their GP, which is not only an issue for patients, but also one which causes a great deal of stress for both receptionists and the doctors themselves.

We decided that something had to be done for the benefit of all. The patients were unhappy; the doctors finding it difficult to withstand the stress and the receptionists were left trying to please everyone. This is in addition to pressure from the Government to see patients within 48hours.

After several members of the practice attended a meeting arranged by The Primary Care Collaborative it was decided to introduce a new appointment system - **Advanced Access**. The basis of the new system is that patients will phone or call for an appointment on the day that they wish to see the doctor. The Practice will offer an appointment within that day in the vast majority of cases and certainly within the next working day.

In order to work out how many doctors will be needed to ensure that this can happen the Practice have been collecting information over the last 6 months.

It has become obvious that some of the GPs have too many patients on their list and to alleviate the situation they have appointed a **new partner** who is due to start in January, and also another **assistant** doctor to help cover for holidays.

As with any new system there are obviously questions which people raise and areas of concern. Some of the most frequently asked questions are:

"Will I be able to get through on the telephone, as most people will be phoning early in the morning?"

The phone lines will be open from 08.15am and we have increased the number of incoming lines to four. Making an appointment should be a much speedier process than it currently is, as the receptionists will only be dealing with appointments for that day. It would be extremely helpful if enquiries of a general nature could be left until later in the morning and queries regarding results could be left until after 2pm. As at present, requests for home visits should be made as early as possible in the day.

"Will I be able to see my own doctor?"

Each doctor will start the day with virtually all the appointments in their surgeries free. This contrasts with the current situation where the appointments have already been booked, sometimes for several weeks! In general the hope is that more people will see their own doctor. If their own doctor is away or full up, an appointment with another doctor will be offered for that day. By both doctors and patients adopting a flexible approach it is hoped that the new system will be of benefit to both.

Because the new system offers the opportunity to see the doctor on the day that you wish it is hoped that there will be a number of benefits:

- A reduction in the number of appointments made but not kept. In November there were 100 appointments made but which the patient failed to attend, presumably because they either forgot the appointment or got better before they finally got to see the doctor! This number of appointments represents the equivalent of two surgeries a week of wasted time for the doctor and appointments unavailable to other patients.
- Currently people seem to book an appointment "just in case" they are not better in another week's time, knowing that it may take this length of time to get an appointment. It is the hope of the Practice that their patients will feel more confident in dealing with common ailments such as coughs, colds, stomach upsets and back ache in the knowledge that they can be seen on the day that they phone if the condition is not resolving.

How can you make the best use of the new system?

- Patients will be encouraged to ring on the day that they wish to be seen
- Patients should telephone the practice as early on in the day as possible - they will have a better chance of seeing the doctor of their choice, with some flexibility in the time of the appointment.
- If a patient wishes to see a specific doctor, they should check to make sure that they are in surgery normally on that day (although there may be times when they are away from the practice, such as holidays, illness, courses etc.) - details are available on the reception desk
- A patient may ask the receptionist to arrange for their doctor to speak to them by telephone that day

The Practice appreciate that introducing the new system will be a huge change for everyone and realise that some "fine tuning" will have to take place over the first few months. Feedback from patients will be most welcome.

The introduction of the new appointment system has been done in close collaboration with Pendleside Medical Practice and the Castle Group wishes to thank them for their support.

Website

The practice is about to launch a new website - www.castlemedical.co.uk.

What's on the Website

- Order Repeat Prescriptions Securely
- Information About the Practice
- Opening Hours and Appointments
- News Updates
- Healthy "Links" to Useful Websites

There will also be a facility for people with a visual impairment.

This will be available in the New Year.

New Doctors

Dr Gavin McBride

On 2 January 2002 we will welcome a new full time partner to the practice - Dr Gavin McBride. He will join the practice as an extra doctor, to help meet growing demands.

Dr McBride lives in the area, and has been working in General Practice in the Preston and Blackburn areas for the last two years. Dr McBride will be able to accept new patients onto his list from 1 April 2002. He will be seeing patients from 2 January, and any patients who may wish to register with him should inform the receptionists.

We would particularly welcome any patients currently registered with Drs Ibbotson and Bailey who might wish to transfer to Dr McBride to inform reception, as they have high list sizes.

Dr Helen McKeating

The practice welcomed Dr Helen McKeating to the practice on 1 October as an Assistant in General Practice.

Dr McKeating lives in the area and has worked in General Practice in and around Burnley and Blackburn. Before moving to the area, Dr McKeating worked in General Practice in the Edinburgh area.

Dr McKeating is available in the practice on Monday's and Tuesday's. She joins Drs Hodgson and Hutchison as Assistants to the practice.

Dr Dylan Summers

Dr Summers joined us in August as a GP Registrar, and will be with us for 12 months. Dr Summers is a fully qualified doctor, who is undertaking a period of training within General Practice, having done most of his medical work in hospitals.

Dr Summers is available to see patients, but also undertakes other work within the practice, under the guidance of Dr John Saunders, his GP Trainer.

Health Centre Improvements

Building works are now complete. A programme has been underway since August to improve some of the facilities, for both patients and staff. The main improvements are:

- Additional car parking
- Waiting area for the Treatment Room
- Two additional consulting rooms
- An extension to the dispensary and office accommodation
- Improvements to the records and filing area

This will keep the facilities at the present health centre going until plans are further developed to build a new facility for the town.

Health Visitors

The Health Visitors wish to remind everyone about some of the groups already established:

- Breastfeeding Support Group (Thursdays - 11.30 - 1.00)
- Weaning and Nutrition (last Wednesday each month - 1.00 - 2.30)
- Sleep Clinic - for families who are having problems with their children's sleep pattern
- Positive Parenting Group - for families who would like some alternative ways in which to manage their children's behaviour

Groups meet in the Health Education Room at the Health Centre. Please contact Carolyn, Sandra or Liz for further details - 01200 425171

District Nurses

We would like to congratulate Community Staff Nurse Sarah Smith on the birth of her baby girl Isabella, on the 25 September.