



Dear friends and colleagues,

I do hope you've had some good breaks this summer in spite of the weather. For myself, I'm sorry to say that I've been 'pretty poorly', and have had to take extended sick leave. It is with much gratitude that after six years I've been able to sit back and hand over my PPG commitments to our new vice-chair, Margaret McKinlay, who is a 'star'. From a standing start – and with the help of Dr Rankine – the PPG has grown into a lively and mature patient group, and I wish it well in future.

Please do come and join us at the PPG evening conference on Depression on Thursday, 20 October. It promises to be a fascinating (and not at all depressing) event.

Lastly, the PPG is joining with the Practice in an initiative to collect more e-mail addresses from patients so that we can be contacted more readily for our views on what improvements in service are wanted. Increasing the voice of patients is part of the government's strategy and the PPG welcomes this initiative by the Victoria Medical Centre.

With best wishes to you all,

Gillian Guy, Chair PPG

News from the Practice

STAFF CHANGES

• We are sorry to report a temporary problem with the availability of nurses' appointments as a result of a practice nurse unexpectedly having to take maternity leave with immediate effect. So we are advertising for two new full time practice nurses; and meanwhile we are arranging for a locum nurse to hold the fort.

FLU IMMUNISATIONS

• This year the practice will be open every Saturday morning in October for walk-in flu clinics. All patients eligible for this year's free flu jab will receive a letter shortly. **It is in your interest to be immunised as soon as possible**, so please make an effort to have yours done at one of these sessions.

GP TRAINING

• The Victoria Medical Centre has now become a training practice for general practitioners. This has been achieved by Dr Ash Thakore who will be the GP trainer. Not only does this mean that the practice has reached a high level of clinical competence and organisation, but also that we will be having more doctors in the practice, enabling us to provide more appointments for all our patients. Indeed, we are planning to strengthen our medical team with a new full time GP starting in November/December.

ACUPUNCTURE – OSTEOPATHY

• For those interested, the paper presented to The College of Medicine last May by Professor David Peters and Dr Susan Rankine on the value of these two therapies in a primary care setting can now be accessed in full on: <http://www.biomedcentral.com/1471-2296/12/49/abstract>,

Aziz Pandor,
Practice Manager

BEATING DEPRESSION

'Under the weather', 'down in the dumps', 'having a bad day', we all have ways of explaining not feeling quite ourselves. Most people will experience 'depression' at some time in their lives, and for many of us, it is linked to major events, such as bereavement – or even to seasonal changes.

At this time of year, as we move into the late autumn, with darker and longer nights, and no break until the Christmas holidays, it is easy to start feeling a little down, and for minor issues to develop into serious worries.

However, there are practical things that can be done to manage such feelings, so the PPG has chosen the topic of 'Depression' as the theme of our next event.

Practice staff will be on hand to give information and advice about the causes of depression, how to manage and treat it, and what services are available from and through the Victoria Medical Centre.

We will also ensure that there are

plentiful supplies of helpful leaflets and information about supportive organisations for you to take away.

Having good mental health is an important element of good general health. The VMC is committed to helping everyone get the best advice, support and care to achieve it, so please come along and join us on **20 October**, from 5.30 until 8.00 pm.

EXERCISE CLASSES for the over-60s

**Thursdays 11–12 noon at the VMC
also at Lees Place**



Please ask at reception for details

FREE ON A TRIAL BASIS



I joined VMC in June 2010. Having previously worked in a GP practice for 5 years, I then went into Private Travel Health and also spent a year working at St George's Hospital on the Bone Marrow Transplant Unit. So when the opportunity arose to re-join a GP practice I was delighted to take it.

There have been lots of changes during my brief time here, with new management, and new nursing and reception staff. We now have a complete team in reception and are looking forward to improving things even further.

The reception staff do a great job and as the term suggests they are certainly in the frontline! It is a challenging yet rewarding job with no two days alike.

We welcome suggestions and new ideas from the public on how we can strive to make life easier for everyone concerned. So please feel free to ask for me at anytime to chat about your concerns, or simply have your say on how things could be better.

Dee Vaughan
Reception Manager

SOS – CAN YOU HELP?

The Patient Participation Group (PPG) is looking for a Membership Secretary to keep our contact list up to date and join the PPG Committee in seeking ways of further improving the patient experience at Victoria Medical Centre. You need to have basic keyboard skills. It would involve up to 2-3 days a month, largely in your own time. If you are interested please contact Margaret McKinlay at vmcppg@yahoo.co.uk

IF YOU BOOK IT, KEEP IT!

Please let the practice know – even on the day – if you are unable to keep an appointment, so that the time can be made available to others.

The NHS reforms – and how they affect you

One of the weaknesses of the media, according to a respected BBC journalist, is that it prefers an exciting headline to the more complex truth of the matter. We are fortunate that PPG committee member Mark Platt can give us an update on what's going on behind the scenes with the proposed changes in the NHS.

'The Health Bill containing the Government's proposals on changes to the NHS has been delayed to allow for a wide-ranging 'listening exercise' and the tabling of subsequent Commons amendments. Despite the amendments, there is still disquiet in many quarters, especially about the sections of the Bill that will allow more private organisations to compete to provide NHS services.

By the time you are reading this it is likely that the focus of media coverage will be on the debates on the Health Bill taking place at the party conferences. Labour and the Liberal Democrats are likely to be the most vociferous in their opposition, although a number of Conservative MPs and Lords have also spoken of their dissatisfaction. The Bill will then be debated in the House of Lords, where it is likely to be subjected to further critique and proposals for change.

In the 'real world', the NHS is facing changes already, with Clinical Commissioning Consortia beginning to become more involved in the way healthcare services are provided. Some of the structures of the 'old' NHS are changing – for example Primary Care Trusts in London are being reduced in size, and these smaller organisations are being brought together into 'clusters', both to reduce costs, and to make the system ready for the changes necessitated by the Health Bill when it becomes an Act of Parliament.

The Victoria Medical Centre is represented in the Consortia that covers our area (called the Victoria Clinical Commissioning Group), and will be working to ensure that as things progress VMC patients are informed of any changes that will affect their care. In the meantime, 'on the ground' and in the surgery, nothing has changed nor will it change for the immediate future. So whatever you may read in the newspapers, your local health centre will continue to offer the great range and quality of services that you have come expect, and that we in the PPG will continue to champion.' (Mark Platt)

A-Z of VMC SERVICES

Acupuncture
Anticoagulation clinic
Asthma and COPD review
BRT clinic
Cardiovascular clinic
Cervical smear testing
Child psychology
Childhood immunisation
Counselling
Diabetic clinic
Dietician
Exercise classes for the over-60s
Family planning and coil fitting
Health visitor advice
IAPT psychotherapy
Influenza immunisation
Linkworker for the elderly
Maternal and child health clinic
Minor Surgery
Routine medical check-ups
Smoking cessation
Travel advice and immunisation
Women's health clinic

FORTHCOMING PPG EVENT

'DEPRESSION'

with a team of speakers including

Dr Clair Pollard

Westminster IAPT Psychology Service

Dr Sara Ketteley

Victoria 3 Community Mental Health Team

Liz Greenway
VMC Practice Counsellor

Thursday, 20 October
5.30 – 8.00 pm

in the Group Room, ground floor,
Victoria Medical Centre