



Dear PPG members,

The committee has had a busy time since our last newsletter and we have held two very good meetings. Our Christmas get-together was combined with a presentation from the St. John's Ambulance. With humour, but with a serious intent, we were shown how to deal with some of the emergencies that occur most frequently at Christmas. Of course we all eat and drink too much over that period and this leads to more strokes, heart attacks, falls and choking. We are all much wiser now on how to deal with these problems. Some of our braver colleagues even got down on the floor and tried mouth-to-mouth resuscitation and heart massage on the dummy provided.

Our February meeting was the AGM when we voted in Professor Linda Hantrais as Vice Chairman, Phillip Hardwick as Treasurer, Halima Suuward as Secretary and Gloria Leoni, Diana Bennett, Martin Warwick, Sheila Thurrold and Harry Bourne as committee members with various responsibilities. Our speaker was Kate Howie, the Project Manager of the new Polyclinic (see article below). On 29 March Mr Stafford, senior consultant at Chelsea & Westminster, is to talk to us about incontinence. It seems to be the most popular subject ever – if the enquiries are anything to go by. At our May meeting we shall have Dr Alexander Brand, Senior Rheumatologist from C & W. You must agree that we are getting some eminent speakers these days. Do please come to these meetings, we are always happy to see new faces.

We all hope you have a good spring going into summer – with some sun and heat to warm our frozen bones.

Best wishes,

Gillian Guy, (PPG Chair)

WHAT'S NEW IN VINCENT SQUARE

NHS Westminster is expanding the range of health and well-being services on offer to people in their local area with the development of a new health 'hub' at the South Westminster Centre for Health at 82 Vincent Square.

The aim is to improve patient access to a wide range of services closer to home, and to offer a more pleasant and convenient patient experience including better facilities, extended access and increased opening hours.

For some months a refurbishment programme has been under way at the Centre. Whilst there has been some disruption to existing services, we have tried to keep this to a minimum and have worked to ensure that both staff and patients have been fully informed about the work that has been going on.

A lot of this work is now complete and we have been able to introduce several new services in the Centre. Once the new Vincent Square Health Centre has settled down, NHS Westminster plans to introduce similar health hubs or 'poly-systems' in other parts of the borough in the future.

All services are clinically led and are available to NHS patients upon referral from your GP.

New facilities now include:

- An expanded podiatry facility, providing a range of new services. This includes a basic foot care service, offering foot care advice and help with nail cutting.
- A local diabetes service that enables patients to see the whole team delivering their care, including the consultant, nurse and dietician.
- A Cardiac 'MyAction' Service – a family-based community cardiovascular prevention programme, offering advice on lifestyles, healthy living and well-being to prevent heart disease and strokes.
- A new psychological therapies service, providing support and counselling.
- A new musculoskeletal service including physiotherapy, osteopathy and pain management.
- A community gynaecology and dermatology service that will offer minor procedures.

Over the next few months we hope to open an urgent care/walk-in-centre, a sexual health service for young people and a community cardiac service.

*Kate Howie
Polysystem Project Manager
NHS Westminster*

A WELCOME NEW INITIATIVE IN WESTMINSTER

A BASIC FOOT CARE SERVICE

NHS Westminster has decided that basic footcare (i.e. nail care etc) is important to the local community in ensuring that the elderly remain as mobile and active as possible. If you want to take advantage of this new service you should first make an appointment with your GP and have a clinical assessment to see whether your foot problems need to be dealt with by a clinical podiatrist or need more simple treatment. The NHS is planning to offer a free self referral service for basic footcare at a number of locations in the area. Please look out for more detailed information in our next newsletter.

D N A

On your medical records means

DID NOT ATTEND

ARE YOU one of those people who do NOT cancel appointments?

I was passing the senior Podiatrist at Vincent Square recently. He was talking to a security man. I made some quip about time to spare and he told me he had booked in four new patients that afternoon and each had 45 minutes allotted to them. It was by now 5 pm and only ONE patient had turned up. In that time he could have cut the nails, and dealt with the corns and calluses of at least ten old age pensioners who have to wait ages for an appointment. The same story could be told about every medical clinic the country. It is costing the NHS millions of pounds and stopping us all being seen by professional medical staff as quickly as we need.

PLEASE DON'T BE A DNA!

LETTERS from patients – it's good to hear from you

ARTHRITIS SUFFERERS

Dear PPG,

Could you please consider holding one of your meetings on the subject of arthritis. Sometimes it comes on slowly and I am sure that many who have suffered mild attacks could be helped by learning more about the reasons why it occurs and what to do before it seriously affects their lives. Thank you. *Giles S.*

Reply from the PPG Chair

It is indeed a painful subject and one which affects a great number of us to a greater or lesser extent. Your letter prompted us to consider holding a PPG meeting later this year and inviting a physiotherapist to advise on some easy exercises to keep joints moving and reduce pain. Watch the notice board for more information. *Gillian Guy*

News from the Practice

NURSING STAFF We are now building up our nursing team after a period of locums following the departure of Nurse Penny and Nurse Charlotte and the absence of Nurse Rosy on sick leave. We now have three new nurses – Joanna Robson, Alison Young and Gillian Smith and are temporarily keeping on Grace Martins-Joseph for the anti-coagulation clinic. We are also in the process of recruiting a fourth and maybe a fifth nurse. The nurses will also be wearing uniforms in the near future as it was felt this would not only be more professional but enable patients to identify them easily.

NEW DOCTORS Dr Nicola Buxton who is very experienced in paediatrics and general practice as a whole will be joining us in three months time. We are also recruiting another doctor and contract negotiations are going on at the moment. This will provide approximately 200 new doctor appointments a week.

'FLU IMMUNISATION Again we have done very well in the seasonal 'flu campaign with one of the highest uptake rates in Westminster. The campaign will finish on March 31st. However you will still be able to get a swine 'flu (H1N1) immunisation up until 31 August. Although the number of cases of swine 'flu have decreased the pandemic is not over yet and we would still recommend all those who are eligible to be immunised. If you are in an at risk group, over 65, under five or pregnant please come and have an immunisation. Full details are available at the practice.

POLYSYSTEM This is going ahead with the main 'hub' at South Westminster Centre for Health in Vincent Square. Dr Susan Rankine and Mr Andrew Kolenda (Practice Manager) will be on the board and a patient representative has now been selected from a different practice. Part of his remit will be to organise regular meetings for local residents to attend and produce information as well as taking in patient views. *Dr Susan Rankine*

IF YOU BOOK IT, KEEP IT!

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

A day in the life of a general practitioner at the Victoria Medical Centre

All GP practices are different: they vary in the catchment area, the number of patients, number and skills of doctors, nurses and support staff, as do the standards of care patients receive and the amount of choice they have in access to services.

A large London practice, such as the Victoria Medical Centre which has 11,000 registered patients and a 30 per-cent annual turnover of patients, may have little in common with practices in other urban areas outside London. Even within a practice, the pattern of activities varies from day to day, from one GP to another, and over time. To give a flavour of their daily routine, the GPs at the Victoria Medical Centre were asked to describe a 'duty day', when they are 'on call'.

The GP on duty arrives at the Centre by 08.00. Mondays are particularly busy after the weekend. Although GPs do not handle out-of-hours calls, a pile of faxes will be waiting for them the next day, in addition to messages from patients who have waited until the surgery opens.

During course of the morning, the GP speaks on the telephone to between 10 and 60 patients. Many cases can be dealt with by telephone. Appointments are given by the receptionist on the day for emergencies, and when the available times have all been filled the duty doctor telephones the patients to arrange additional appointments. The GP on duty makes notes on the computer during the calls, and these are checked at the end of the session to ensure that all home visits

have been booked, and all queries have been followed up.

At 13.00, the partners and the practice manager hold their first meeting in the week to discuss any issues that need immediate attention.

The GP on call fits in a quick snack before making home visits, and then returns to see the patients who were asked to come into the surgery in the afternoon. S/He remains on call until 18.30 and will expect to get home by 20.00.

In addition to duty days and regular surgeries, each GP holds clinics in his or her specialist area. As more treatments and care are being brought into the community from the hospitals, doctors have become more specialised and spend some of their time providing clinics. A large practice therefore offers a better skill mix, but care may be given by a number of clinicians.

In an average month, each GP in the practice expects to see about 400 patients and to receive about 100 calls, including requests for referrals and the monitoring of repeat prescriptions. Practice partners also visit residents in nursing homes and provide medical services for homeless people in the area.

Our GPs also attend regular meetings with representatives from the PCT and consultants to be kept informed of medical advances. Even a partner on a two-thirds time contract regularly works a 40-hr week.

Compiled by Professor Linda Haintrais, Vice Chairman, Victoria Medical Centre PPG

SUMMARY CARE RECORDS –

The NHS in England is introducing a electronic Care Records Service in order to give healthcare staff quicker access to information about you to help with your treatment, including in an emergency. Detailed records will be held locally and Summary Care Records (SCRs) will be held nationally.

The new system should greatly improve the safety and quality of patient care, but sharing information also has its risks. Some people have concerns about the confidentiality and security of the system and their ability to access their own records. You have a right to opt out of the system, but before doing so or if you have any concerns about how it all works – we recommend that you read all about it on line at www.nhs.carerecords.nhs.uk. An extract from this document, 'Frequently Asked Questions', is available at reception. Alternatively you can ring the NHS Care Records Service Information Line on 0845 603 8510. Summary Care Records are being introduced in the London area now.

MAY PPG MEETING

Date to be announced

TOPIC

Rheumatology

Speaker

Dr Alexander Brand
Senior Rheumatologist,
Chelsea & Westminster Hospital

in the Group Room, ground floor,
Victoria Medical Centre