

# School Lane Surgery

## PATIENT REFERENCE GROUP (PRG) MINUTES (Condensed)

Meeting: Thursday 31<sup>st</sup> July 2014

### NEW MEMBERS

This evening we were joined by 5 new faces, and they are a most welcome addition to the group. These are challenging times for the surgery and the more representative the PRG is seen to be the more influence we are likely to be able to exert.

### GP RESOURCING/FUNDING

There is a chronic shortage of GPs in Norfolk and elsewhere, which has led to some hysterical coverage in the media; particularly in respect of events now unfolding in Watton. If this shortage is not addressed with some seriousness it will surely lead to a crisis in general practice.

School Lane is a teaching practice, and it can be up to 7 years before a doctor is fully qualified to practice as a GP. Many doctors are now asking themselves why they should bother, with so much ill-considered government and media criticism there is a perfectly understandable lack of enthusiasm, and trainee GPs are often shocked by the level of pressure.

The practice knows from experience that losing a GP and then trying to recruit their replacement has become a most frustratingly difficult task, to the point of having to advertise abroad.

The Watton situation is not unique, but they are having to deal with an unfortunate set of circumstances. The practice has lost half its GPs through retirement, with another having returned to his native Germany.

In order to keep the surgery open the Watton practice has been put in the position of having to de-register a significant number of patients, and this has attracted some very nasty feedback. The surgery has received hate-mail and the Practice Manager is currently under police protection!

There has been a tendency to blame the current problems in Watton on the immigrant population, but the fact is they have had nothing to do with it. It's a sobering thought that some 7 or 8 years ago there were just 2 GP vacancies in Norfolk, while today there are 54.

Watton is making all the headlines this week but there are other practices in Norfolk who are facing similar problems, and the fear is that it could happen to our very own surgery. We have a number of GPs who are 'of an age', and there is the likelihood that they will be looking to retire at around the same time; while this may not be an imminent concern, it requires some planning ahead.

More immediately there is a danger that funding cuts may be in the pipeline, which could see the surgery having to withdraw its services from the Healthy Living Centre (HLC). The rent for these premises is enormous, but as a PFI (Private Finance Initiative) the owners of the building are guaranteed to get their money whether the surgery is in place or not. Some might consider it to be an act of madness to be paying the PFI company and have the rooms stand empty, while the surgery is able to utilise them for exactly the same cost.

To add to this is a possible cut in funding for clinical staff, which would inevitably lead to a cull in their number (withdrawal from the HLC will mean having to cram everybody into the School Lane building).

In recent years the share of NHS monies allocated to general practice has fallen from 12% to 8%, and more cuts will undoubtedly see an increase in the number of patients bypassing their own surgery and heading straight for the nearest A&E Department.

There has been no outcry at the proposals for further cuts, the government insists, 'nobody is complaining'. Patients, if they value local services, will need to express themselves in no uncertain terms.

There is an RCGP petition currently being circulated at the surgery, and an online version of the same at <http://www.rcgp.org.uk/campaign-home/get-involved/petition/petition-england.aspx> (please do not sign both the hard copy and the online version). The RCGP aims to make clear the facts of the situation; 90%

of all NHS patient contacts are through the GP, and despite the ever increasing workload being placed on general practice the government is still contemplating significant cuts in funding.

The **Your GP Cares** leaflet is now available at the surgery, which gives details of how patients can show their support and make a real difference. Those with internet access can join the campaign by visiting the BMA website at [www.bma.org.uk/YourGPCares](http://www.bma.org.uk/YourGPCares).

It is regrettable that GP surgeries should be having to consider the closure of their books, and worse still the de-registering of patients. Neither of these options are seen as acceptable by School Lane Surgery.

General Practice in the UK is the envy of the World, and it is alarming to see the cracks now appearing in the structure of the NHS. MPs will not change course until there is protest, and they fear the loss of votes!

## **AWARENESS DAY 2015**

Keith (PRG Chair), as president of the local drama group, is keen to crack on with the organising of the proposed awareness day for 2015. This will most likely take place in or around March, and the preferred venue is the Carnegie Rooms. This is very much Keith's area of expertise, he has a lot of experience in organising events. Where he will need assistance is with the programme, and the contact details for all those interested parties.

There are the obvious issues that can be presented (stroke, heart attack etc.), but we will need 3 or 4 more to make up a full programme. Clinicians will be asked for their advice.

As well as the individual presentations mentioned above we could invite organisations such as Age UK and St. John's Ambulance, who could set up stalls to offer advice and information about their own service.

## **OTHER BUSINESS**

**School Lane TV Monitor:** Quotes are currently being sought for an improved service, with a particular requirement being the ability to control the display options (font colour etc.) Patients have complained that the screen is difficult to read, and the ability to adjust the display should resolve this issue.

**Proactive Care Planning:** PCP is primarily designed for the 2% of patients at most risk of being admitted to hospital in an emergency, and involves a care co-ordinator visiting them in their home so that a care plan can be established. This scheme will help to prevent avoidable hospital admissions.

**Over 75s:** School Lane is working with other surgeries to try and gain the funding for health checks for all patients over the age of 75. Checks would identify whether individuals required a more comprehensive examination by a GP/Specialist.

**Staff Changes:** Practice nurse Elaine Johnson has retired.

**Dr Tracey Tessaro** has gained British Citizenship, she is also a holder of the Canadian equivalent.

**Young Adult Carers:** Kathryn Norry, the Young Adult Carers lead from Norwich Carers, will be holding a clinic at the surgery during the afternoon of 21<sup>st</sup> August. This is in support of young adults who find themselves having to look after and care for parents and/or siblings from a very young age.

**Dementia Club:** There is a dementia club every Friday at Lord Walsingham Court, between the hours of 10 AM and 1 PM. It is a community friendly cafe club where sufferers and carers are invited to chat over a cuppa and a biscuit, and generally offer peer support to one another. A reminiscence training class is designed to help people to remember, while carers are encouraged to come and 'unload'. Lunch is provided at midday, and the club is proving very successful.

**Mind Your Step:** This is a Norfolk County Council funded exercise course of 8 weeks, which is aimed at people who are seen to be unsteady on their feet and at risk of falling. It involves chair based exercises to improve strength and balance, and is held at the HLC. There is a charge of £10 which goes towards the cost of ankle weights and an exercise book.

The PRG was informed of another exercise scheme for which its organisers are hoping to gain support from the surgery. It is aimed at a comprehensive number of population groups including cardiac, COPD, stroke etc., but this is not a decision that is down to the surgery. Any request for funding or clinical staff has to be presented to the CCG (Care Commissioning Group).

**NEXT MEETING: Thursday October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 7 PM at School Lane Surgery.**