

# The GP



# Direct Journal

*Keeping you informed*

**February 2011 – Volume 5 Issue 3**

**We meet Dr. Nizar Merali in the *meet the doctor segment***



**We answer some commonly asked questions in the *Patient Corner***

**We discuss the importance of the flu vaccination for next autumn/winter following this year's flu virus**

**We discuss our new automated appointment booking system (Patient Partner)**

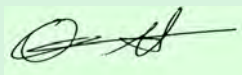
*Background image of the flu virus: renjith krishnan / FreeDigitalPhotos.net*

**F**lu has well and truly dominated proceedings this winter. Harrow had some of the highest flu like illness rates in London. We had a surge of patients wanting the flu vaccine in January which is usually the month when we are wrapping up the last few vaccines. All this highlighted the need for yearly vaccination to reduce the risk of contracting flu which can cause serious complications especially in patients with pre-existing medical conditions such as Asthma and Diabetes and those aged over 65 who are at greater due to their age.

We are finalising the flu vaccine orders for next autumn from now and we would urge all our patients who fall in an at risk group to get vaccinated as early as possible this coming autumn to give you the best possible protection against the main circulating strains of flu.

In the last GP Direct Journal we announced the launch of Patient Partner, our automated telephone booking system, which allows you to book, check or cancel an appointment 24 hours a day seven days a week by calling our main number and pressing option 1. It is important that we have your up to date telephone numbers as the system requires your date of birth and one of your telephone numbers to identify you. Please inform one of our receptionists if you have changed your telephone number(s) so that we can update your records.

In January 2011, more than 500 appointments were booked using either Patient Partner or EMIS Access (our online interactive system). Appointments on the same day are available from 5am on the day so **you can avoid the rush for telephone calls at 8am by calling after 5am to book a same day appointment using the automated appointment booking system by calling 020 8515 9300 and pressing option 1 or by using EMIS Access.**



**Omer Hussein**

**In this quarter's Journal we will answer some frequently asked questions (FAQs)**

Q) I need a letter from my GP to send to the Housing Department at the Council, why I am being asked to pay £25 for this?

A) It is important to understand that many GPs are not employed by the NHS; they are self-employed and they have to cover their costs - staff, buildings, heating, lighting, etc - in the same way as any small business. The NHS covers these costs for NHS work, but for non-NHS work, the fees charged by GPs contribute towards their costs.



Q) I really want an EMIS Access account but why am I being asked to bring in a passport or driving license?

A) We take your confidentiality very seriously and we want to minimise any possible breach of that confidentiality by putting in safety checks. EMIS Access allows you to book, cancel and check appointments, request repeat medication, check and update contact details and message the Practice securely, therefore we want to be totally sure, like a bank does when handing over your money that the registration document is going to the right person.

Q) I wanted to book an appointment with Dr Merali, but was told he was not available for over a week, how can that be right?

A) We offer appointments up to four weeks in advance with all of our regular doctors, so at times their sessions may get booked well in advance. Also the doctors may have a variety of external commitments, so Dr Merali for instance is now only doing a few sessions per week at the Practice. It is worth having in mind another one or two doctors that you would like to see so that we can try and accommodate your needs. We have made a concerted effort to ensure that you can be seen in a timely fashion, usually on the day when you call, but can't guarantee which doctor will see you

**D**r Nizar Merali has been a GP for over 30 years. He was the lead partner at GP Direct for the majority of that time taking the Practice from a small two doctor practice to the largest Practice in Harrow with around 15,000 patients

What do you like most about being a GP?

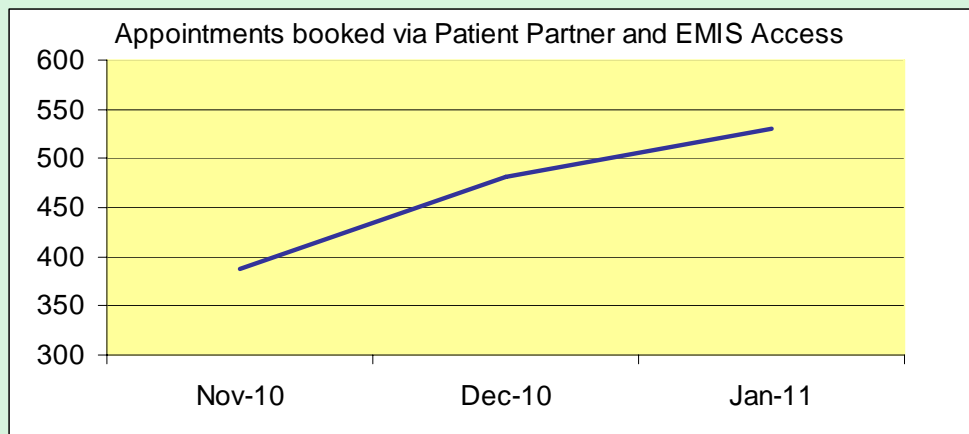
I regard myself as truly a generalist and have remained so for the last 30 years in practice. Luckily I have always had a female partner at the practice from day 1 and that has invariably shifted women's problems including gynaecology and obstetrics towards my female partners. I see patients of all ages although care of the elderly particularly interests me and I have attained a Diploma in Geriatric Medicine. Diabetes, Hypertension (high Blood pressure) and risk management of cardiovascular disease are my strong points as I drill down to details for absolute control in partnership with my patients. Mental Health illness and relationship problems are again what I particularly enjoy and I consider myself a good listener.

How has general Practice changed since you started in 1979? When I started at Welbeck Road some 30+ years ago from a small premises called 7a Welbeck Road, we had 4 rooms in all, 2 consulting, one waiting room and one admin room. There were no computers, records were piled in boxes and patients were seen without appointments. I remember Pamela Taor, my then partner, and myself agreeing to fork out about £100 for the Council to agree to erect a bench outside the main side door for the benefit of our patients who often overflowed in our waiting room. This bench was subsequently moved to the front of the building when the entrance door location altered. General Practice in Harrow has gone through huge changes. Patient demand has doubled to start with. Various external influences, majority for the better, have had a major impact on the way General Practice occurs today. Information technology has not only empowered patients but has helped the GP in being able to provide evidence based services. Monitoring of long term conditions is infinitely more robust with IT. Clinician appraisals, monitoring of behaviour in terms of prescribing, referrals etc all add up to the challenges of modern practice.

Tell us about your role on the Harrow Clinical Commission Board (CCB)? I have recently been appointed on the Harrow CCB. The partners kindly agreed to relieve me from the practice for 2 sessions a week. This has been a very steep learning curve for me but I am thoroughly enjoying the work. It has certainly been an eye opener. Its unlikely that the CCB will be able to influence any significant changes or shifts in the year 11/12 but beyond that I feel there are huge opportunities for service re design for the benefit of Harrow's 230,000 population.

**I**n the past month more than 500 appointments have been booked using Patient Partner or EMIS Access. Both services allow you to book, cancel or check appointments around the clock, throughout the week, when we are open or closed.

GP appointments which open up on the day are available to book via Patient Partner from 5am, a whole three hours before the Surgery is open to allow you to book without waiting on the phone. Just press option 1 when we are open or closed to use this convenient service.



In addition we offer a service called EMIS Access which is an online interactive system allowing you to manage your GP and blood test appointments, request repeat medication, message the Practice securely and update your contact details. To set up an EMIS Access account you need a registration document which you can collect from reception, you will need to bring in proof of visual ID in the form of a passport or driving license. For children aged 10 and under you will need to bring their proof of ID as well as one of their parent's ID to issue their registration document. For more details just ask at reception. Like with Patient Partner you can book appointments around the clock, so if you login before 8am in the morning you can book the same day appointments for that day.

## **Hay Fever seasonal advice**

If you have been prescribed Hay Fever medication in the past you can request it like any repeat medicine and it will be issued within two working days. If you have not been prescribed Hay Fever medication at the Practice or if you require advice please request a telephone consultation with one of our doctors.

## **Contraceptive choices**

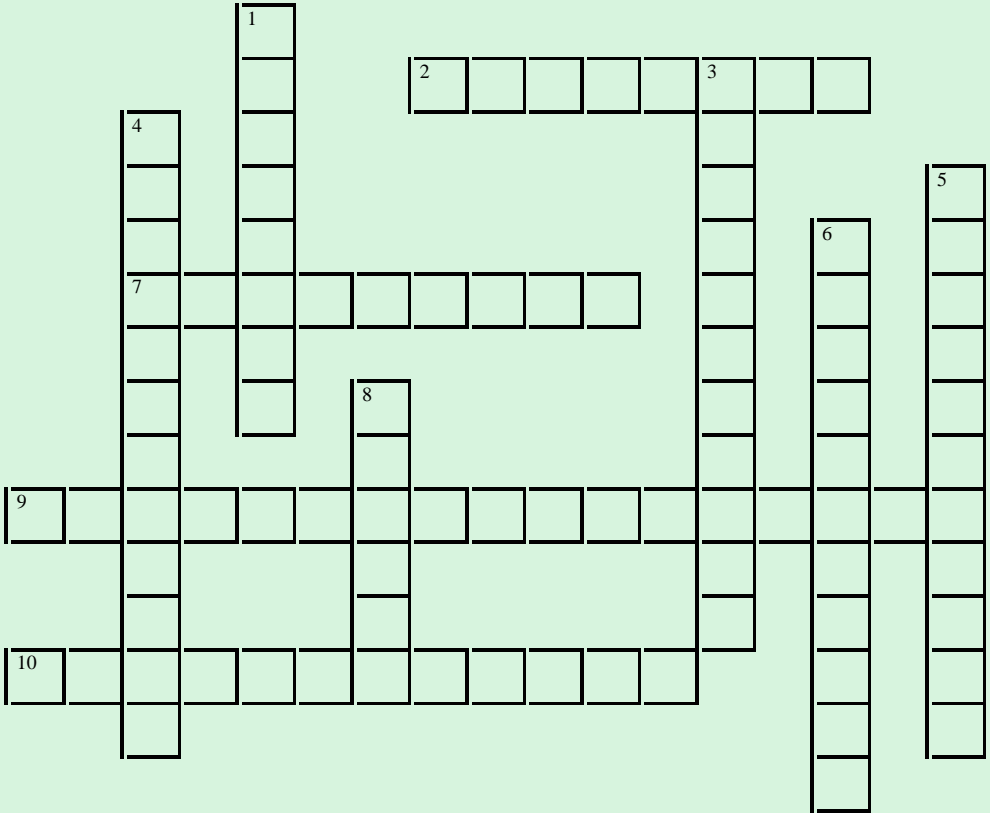
Deciding on the best form of contraception can often be a difficult process with so many available options. The Family Planning Association (FPA) has devised a concise document which goes through the common forms of contraception, detailing their pros and cons. This includes forms of LARC (Long Acting Reversible Contraception) e.g. the coil. You can view this document on our website [www.gpdirect.co.uk](http://www.gpdirect.co.uk) by going to the practice policies section.

Within the Practice both Dr Yaqoob and Dr Sherif fit coils. If you would like to discuss this or other contraception options just make an appointment with one of our doctors.

## **Cardiovascular and Diabetes risk assessment programmes**

The Practice has long been involved in a Diabetes risk assessment programme for those at greater risk of developing Diabetes, this looks at a number of risk factors which include Body Mass Index, family history and ethnicity. The purpose of the programme is to detect Diabetes or pre-diabetes so that early action can be taken through lifestyle changes and/or medical intervention. This has been very successful over the past few years with many dozens of patients getting an early diagnosis minimising the risk of complications in the future. This year we introduced a new screening programme for cardiovascular risk with the aim of detecting those at increased risk to help them reduce the changes of a future heart attack or stroke. If you are invited for one of these risk assessment tests please take up the offer as it may help you prevent future health problems through lifestyle changes and/or early medical intervention.

# Health Puzzle



### ACROSS

- 2 The 'M' in MRI
- 7 The official name of the flu
- 9 Road of the world renowned children's hospital
- 10 High blood pressure

### DOWN

- 1 The common name for the H1N1 strain of flu
- 3 Inflammation of the tonsils
- 4 A form of cancer treatment
- 5 Children's medicine
- 6 A well known painkiller
- 8 A blockage of an artery in the brain

Across: 2. Magnetic, 7. Influenza, 9. Great Ormond Street, 10. Hypertension. Down: 1. Swine Flu, 3. Tonsillitis, 4. Radiotherapy, 5. Paracetamol, 6. Stroke, 8. Stroke



# Shaftesbury Pharmacy

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call: 020 8423 5818



by Official  
Appointment