

The GP Direct Journal

Keeping you informed

February 2012 – Volume 6 Issue 3

The editor's column

Getting through on the phones: You said, we did



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Help us help you by keeping your appointments

Comings and goings at GP Direct

Kick the habit – find out how our in-house smoking cessation advisor can help you

News Round Up

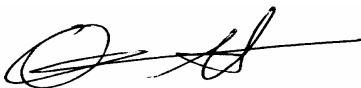
Editor's Column

I would like to start the first Issue of the 2012 Journal by thanking the many patients who gave us gifts and cards over the festive period, on behalf of all the staff at the Surgery. We wish all our patients a happy and healthy 2012.

Secondly, I would like to offer my sincere apology to all patients who were inconvenienced when they called or attended the Practice in the past few months due to the severe IT problems we encountered. The problems led to our clinical system running exceptionally slow, which delayed the clinicians during their sessions, the receptionists on the phones and front desk, as well as the important functions undertaken by our admin team. At the time of writing this Journal the problems have improved a little, but do bear with us while we find a permanent solution to these ongoing problems, which is likely to come in the form of a significant upgrade to our clinical system.

I hope you will join me in welcoming our new nurse practitioner Sonia Branco to GP Direct. Sonia brings well over 10 years nursing experience to the Surgery and is also an advanced nurse prescriber. Sonia can see patients with minor illnesses such as coughs, infections, headaches, rashes, diarrhoea, vomiting and abdominal pain, amongst other illnesses. She also manages a range of chronic diseases such as Diabetes, Asthma and Hypertension (high blood pressure).

Just to let you know we will be publishing the 2011-2012 Patient Participation Report in February. The report will centre on the results of the Local Patient Survey which we completed in August-September 2011. We will be publishing the report on our website as well as in printed form, which will be available at all of our sites from reception.



Omer Hussein

Getting through on the phones: You said, we did

In past years an area where you felt our service could be improved was in respect to getting through on the phones. We took your views seriously and made significant improvements to our system so that contacting the Surgery would be made easier. The results have been quite remarkable in such a short space of time.



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The average time it takes to answer a call has fallen from 1 minute and 38 seconds in July to December 2010 to 1 minute and 4 seconds from July to December 2011, **a drop of 34 seconds per call, which represents a 35% reduction in the time you wait to have your call answered on average.** This has resulted in approximately the same percentage drop in unanswered calls, i.e. when you hang up before your call is answered.

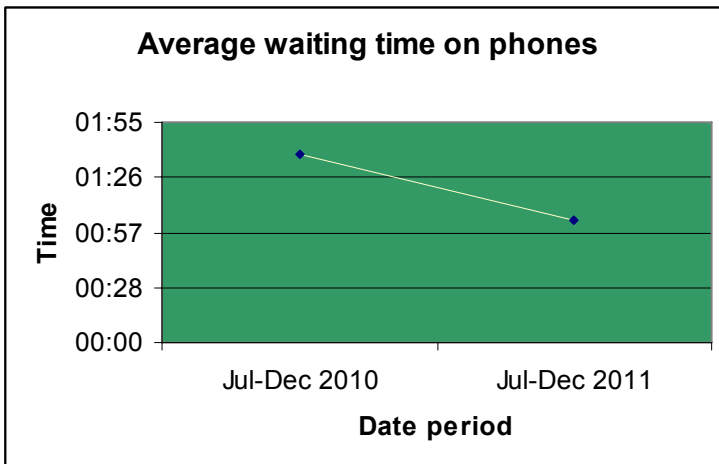
We achieved this by putting in place the following improvements:

1) We invested approximately £12,000 in an automated telephone appointment system which allows you to book, check and cancel appointments on the telephone around the clock (excluding short periods usually late night/early morning when the system backs up). This system has gone from strength to strength with 400 to 500 appointments now regularly being booked this way every month.

2) We invested in a state-of-the-art system which connects our branch sites to our main telephone switchboard so that the receptionists working from there can help to take calls during busy periods.

3) We invested in a call monitoring software which allows us to monitor the number of calls coming into the Surgery in real time so we are able to respond to spikes in demand. We respond by asking our admin team and branch sites to support our receptionists in taking calls. We are also able to analyse call trends to plan more effectively for the future.

4) We continue to promote EMIS Access, the online system, which allows you to book, check and cancel appointments online, as well as requesting repeat medication and messaging the Practice securely. This not only allows you to manage a number of health needs online, but also reduces the pressure on the phones resulting in improved telephone access.



We keep a very close eye on our access system to ensure we can continue to offer a high level of service. If you would like to share feedback with the Practice please do not hesitate to do so.

You can contact the Practice Manager, Omer Hussein, by calling the Surgery or, alternatively, emailing him on info@gpdirect.co.uk. You can also leave any comments via the suggestion boxes placed at all of our reception desks which are opened by the Patient Reference Group.

Thinking of kicking the habit? Find out how Nicky can help

Hello! My name is Nicky Coote and I am the Stop Smoking Advisor working at GP Direct (Butler Avenue) on behalf of NHS Harrow Stop Smoking Service. If you are a current smoker, the temptation to stop reading right about now will be quite strong....I know, as I have been in your situation, however please do read on!



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I was a smoker from my mid teens to my early 30's. I was what we in the Healthcare industry call an "experienced smoker". I had worked within the NHS since 2003, and when I moved into a specialised area of COPD (Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease) in 2007 I decided that I wanted to stop smoking, for my health, my wealth (20 cigs per day costs £2,410 per year these days!!)

my future, and my job of course was a motivating factor too! I tried several approaches, I went "cold turkey", and I tried to "cut down", but I could not give up entirely. So I went to my GP and was given Nicotine Patches and some Lozenges, it was not "easy" but having the right products and the support from my GP practice did make giving up "easier". There were "blips" along the way, times when I wondered IF I could become smoke free, but we are now three and a half years down the line and I am a non smoker.

The most recent evidence we have shows that with the expert help from someone like me, you are FOUR times more likely to stop and stay stopped than if you "went it alone". My job is rewarding and I get great satisfaction from helping people kick the habit for good! **It would be great to see you at the Clinic; all you need to do is book in with reception. My clinic times are on Wednesdays 2:30pm to 4:15pm at Butler Avenue. See...it's that simple 😊**

Help us help you - keep or cancel your booked appointments

The overwhelming majority of patients, around 90%, keep their appointments, whether booked here at the Surgery or as outpatient appointments booked at hospitals or at other clinics. However a small minority of patients do miss booked appointments. This results in valuable appointments which could be offered to other patients going to waste, usually at a very high cost to the Practice and hospital in extra clinical sessions.

If you are unable to make your appointment all we ask is that you cancel it by giving at least one hour's notice so that another patient may be able to make use of it. You can cancel your appointment by calling the Surgery and speaking to a receptionist, using the automated appointment management system by calling the main number and pressing option 1, using EMIS Access to do this online, or by leaving a message on the cancellation line which is 020 8515 9328.



Image: Stuart Miles / FreeDigitalPhotos.net

The Practice policy with respect to missed appointments is to initially send a warning letter for anyone who misses two or more appointments in a one year period and, if after the warning letter another appointment is missed within a six month period, we do reserve the right to remove you from our list.

If you can't keep an outpatient appointment at a hospital or clinic please ensure you call them to re-arrange. **Once an appointment has been missed it usually means you will be discharged back to the Surgery** which then means you will need to be re-referred, unnecessarily taking up the time of the doctors and secretarial team and delaying when you will be seen.

News Roundup

Comings and goings at the Surgery

We welcomed Dr. Anthony Gibson to the Surgery in December, who will be working here until the end of March as a trainee doctor. He replaces Dr. Katherine Grailey who completed her four month placement in December; we wish her all the best in her new role. As mentioned in the Editor's Column, Sonia Branco joined our clinical team in December as a nurse practitioner. She brings a wealth of experience to the Surgery and is also an advanced nurse prescriber.

Patient Reference Group (PRG) Update

We have had two meetings with our PRG since the last Journal. The meetings covered a range of issues including discussion on the Patient Participation Report 2011-2012, which is due to be published in February. We also discussed the launch of the website www.myhealth.london.nhs.uk which contains useful information about the performance of all practices across London. You can contact the PRG directly through the chairwoman, Mrs. Shaw, on 020 8904 6395 or by emailing her on gpdirect-prg@nhs.net. You can also leave comments or suggestions in specifically designated boxes at all three of our reception areas. Please leave your name if you would like us to respond to you directly.

Butler Avenue refurbishment works

At the time of going to print with the Journal we had commenced extensive refurbishment works to Butler Avenue Surgery. The work will involve improvements to the building exterior, hallway, waiting area and consulting rooms. It is expected to be completed by mid February 2012. We will aim to conduct all of the work outside of our opening hours to avoid any inconvenience to you. Please do bear with us while these works are completed. We hope you will like the new look, and we'll be sure to include some photos in the next Journal.



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