

## 6 – MONTHLY REPORT January – June 2020

### COVID – 19

When the coronavirus pandemic struck in early March, all physical contact between the PPG and the Practice was severed as lockdown was imposed. The PPG AGM planned for July was put back to January 2021 and the Committee members' period of office extended to that date.

### OUTREACH

At the Herts Valleys CCG Patients Engagement Network meeting in February, our PPG was given the opportunity to give a Mini-showcase presentation, in the form of a 'Toolkit, on how the PPG tackled the 2019 Patients Survey. Some expressions of interest for further advice have been put on hold until further notice. The PPG was also well-represented at an informative seminar on 'Death and Dying' laid on by the Herts-based Anne Robson Trust.

### PPG ACTIVITIES PUT ON HOLD

The plan to recruit volunteers and participants to 'take over' the Cassiobury Park 5k parkrun on 6 June to promote a more active and healthier lifestyle was halted but has not been abandoned. The PPG awaits the time when such 'crowd' events can be resumed. The Herts Valleys CCG's PPG Incentive Scheme will also be followed up at the appropriate time.

### ON-LINE CONSULTATIONS

Having to radically change its *modus operandi* of dealing with patients, the practice quickly piloted (using PPG Committee members), then implemented an on-line appointments and consultation system – **On Line Consult**. This requires patients to complete and submit a questionnaire on line which is then assessed and actioned by a clinician. Face-to-face consultations are thereby kept to a minimum, enabling strict safety standards to be adhered to within Bridgewater House and Meriden Surgery and allowing staff to carry out other duties associated with the impact of the pandemic. The detailed impact of **On-line Consult** will need to be assessed.

### THE PRACTICE WEBSITE

This has received a major overhaul and is much simpler to follow, including how to use **On-line Consult**. There is also easier and clearer access to PPG information.

### VIDEO COMMUNIICATION USING ZOOM

3 Committee members took part in a zoom meeting on 27 May hosted by St Albans & Harpenden Patients Group, to hear a presentation on how COVID-19 is impacting on Hertfordshire, by Prof. Jim McManus, Director of Public Health Services for Herts County Council. . He gave some enlightening data with maps, showing the varied incidence and deaths across the county, mentioning the high rates for Watford (probably partly due to its proximity to London). There followed a useful Q and A session.

The Committee met on Zoom on 10 June, mainly to plan a Q and A session with Lisa Mackin (LM) Practice Business Manager. A list of 8 headings was agreed and forwarded to LM.

## BRIDGEWATER SURGERIES PATIENT PARTICIPATION GROUP (PPG)

### ZOOM SESSION WITH LISA MACKIN, BUSINESS MANAGER, THURS 18 JUNE

1. **ON-LINE CONSULT** – already referred to above
2. **COVID-19 IN WATFORD** – the current number of deaths was 112 (85 of these occurred during April). Some 30% took place in Park Ward, probably due to the high number of Care Homes located there. LM said she attended Herts Valleys CCG meetings fortnightly and would seek further information.
3. **BACKLOG OF APPOINTMENTS REPRESSED BY COVID-19** – would there be a surge when normal face-to-face consultations are resumed and would the practice have the capacity to cope? – Currently there was no backlog and every patient needing a GP appointment was seeing one. Some of the non urgent activities such as ear syringing, NHS health checks and other health monitoring were paused but mostly have been reinstated again now. The practice was confident it had the capacity to handle post-COVID-19 demand and was still accepting new patients within-area. Regarding evidence that GPs were seeing more patients experiencing stress or depression arising from the epidemic, LM said that there was an increase in the number of patients reporting such symptoms, largely due to isolation, fear surrounding current pandemic and some domestic abuse allegations.
4. **GROUND FLOOR IMPROVEMENT SCHEME** – LM confirmed this work is on target for completion in September. More details are on the practice website.
5. **PRACTICE PROGRESS REPORT** – many activities and projects are on hold e.g. Primary Care Teams, Integrated Care System (ICS) which develops Health and Social Care Partnerships, being piloted in Herts
6. **SOCIAL PRESCRIBING** – three additional Social Prescribers have been appointed, starting in June and August. This group have been recruited across our PCN so will be accepting referrals from the 4 surgeries.
7. **RIVAL PRACTICES** – is there ‘poaching’ going on? To be brought forward. The PPG brought it to the practice attention that a local practice had been putting flyers through residents homes in our area trying to increase their registrations.
8. **PPG MATTERS** – the PPG wish to hold regular (monthly) zoom meetings with the practice including Dr Sankaran if possible. LM agreed but added that Dr S was currently helping run the ‘Hot Hub’ (concentrating all COVID-19 patients together) in this part of Herts.

A further zoom Q & A session is planned for July.

Russell Cleaver, PPG Chair