

## Surgery News

With the school holidays upon us, and children playing outside (assuming it ever gets dry enough to do so) history suggests that there will be an increase in the number of "rough and tumble" injuries, which whilst not particularly serious, sometimes need checking for underlying damage. This isn't just kids either – plenty of parents who, after months of inactivity, suddenly get the urge to romp with their toddlers, take their teenagers on at football or to try out a skateboard whilst nobody is watching, find themselves flat on their faces or clutching damaged limbs following a bit of over-enthusiasm.

The last thing you will want to do on a hot summer afternoon or evening is drive into Colchester just to spend three or four hours queuing in a sweaty Accident and Emergency department to get an injury checked over. This is a reminder that this should only be necessary with really serious injuries. There are other places much better suited to sorting out junior's damaged fingers, Mum's cut knee or Dad's squashed elbow.

The minor injuries units at Clacton and Harwich Hospitals are there for exactly what the name suggests – minor injuries. Clacton is open from 9.00am – 9.00pm, and Harwich from 9.00am – 5.00pm every day. Both are well equipped to check out and deal with things like cuts, burns and possible fractures. They have x-ray and treatment facilities on site – and their waiting times are generally a fraction of those in A&E. The experience will be much less harrowing as kids in pain get sorted out quickly, and parking problems are normally much less severe.

Not only will this be a better experience for you and your loved ones, but if you are dealt with by a minor injuries unit, staff in the A&E department will be less overwhelmed and freed up to deal rapidly with genuine, life-threatening emergencies such as heart attacks, strokes and really serious traffic accidents. Those are what the A&E department is really there for – not childhood bumps and scrapes.

Equally, A&E is not there to deal with things like sunburn, infections and general illnesses. During opening hours, your surgery is the first place to try. At any time, you can get medical advice from NHS Direct by ringing 0845 46 47. If you feel you need to see a doctor when your surgery is closed, please contact the Harmoni out of hours service. They have doctors and nurses on duty and, if someone is genuinely too ill to go to one of their centres, they will do home visits. Alternatively, you could go to the Colchester Walk-in Centre just down from the hospital on Turner Road. It is open from 7.00am – 10.00pm daily.

If you do use one of these services, all of which can be checked out on <http://www.northeastsexpct.nhs.uk>, rather than A&E, not only will you probably be seen quicker and definitely free up emergency staff to do their proper work, you will also save the local health economy a significant amount of money. Of course cost isn't the first consideration when someone needs medical attention, but if we all help by using the most appropriate service, there will be more money available for life-changing treatment of things like cataracts and arthritic hips – problems which make the day to day quality of life for many people miserable, lonely or uncomfortable. A little thought and everybody wins.

We are now coming to terms to life without Dr Letton, who left us at the end of June and now has more time to enjoy what is laughably called "summer" this year. As you know, Dr Bhatti has gone full-time to make up the appointments we have lost. This doesn't mean that you now have to see her if Dr Letton looked after you in the past. You can see whichever GP you prefer, though this might sometimes mean waiting a bit longer if they are already busy, or happen to be on holiday. To help out over the summer, we have several excellent locum GPs lined up to do regular sessions, and this should ensure that everyone can be accommodated, even for routine matters, without too much delay. I'm sure that you will find them very approachable and keen.

Additionally, we hope to welcome a new Registrar early in August. Dr Vine is still on maternity leave and we have missed her input over the last few months. We understand that our new Registrar will be Dr Ashok

Thiruvengadam. As ever, he is an experienced hospital doctor who has decided to try general practice and will be under Dr O'Reilly's wing for his training year. I'll try to tell you more about him next month.

Finally, there's yet another retirement to tell you about. Diana Scales, our senior secretary who has been with us for five years, has opted to spend more time tending to her allotment and a growing band of grandchildren. We wish her a long and happy retirement. We also wish "good luck" to Nicola Lambert who will be switching from reception to secretarial work to replace Diana. An all-round reshuffle means that there won't be any new faces this time – at least not for the time being.

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