

Surgery News

Perhaps not surprisingly, the last few weeks have been very busy with all the winter ailments suddenly catching up with people. We have been working flat out since before Christmas and if you have had difficulties getting an appointment, please accept our apologies. It's just one of those spells I'm afraid.

To help us cope at times like this, please remember that we can do absolutely nothing to cure colds or flu. If you are unlucky enough to succumb to either, please don't come to the surgery. You will just spread your germs around (probably to us) and might well catch something here from someone else while your defences are weakened.

The standard advice is to stay at home if you can, drink plenty of fluids and dose yourself up with over-the-counter remedies from your pharmacy to ease the symptoms. (Don't forget to read the instructions.) If you need advice about self-medication, a call to the pharmacy on 01206 250120 should do the trick. For general advice, NHS Direct on 0845 4647 are very helpful. If you feel that you really are more ill than you should be with a cold or flu, please ring the surgery and ask to talk to a doctor. He or she can then assess your condition and either arrange appropriate medication for you or simply put your mind at rest.

With all the media hype about flu deaths (which at this moment are certainly no higher than in other years), requests for flu jabs have increased dramatically since the New Year. We are obtaining what stocks we can, but supply is limited, so only people who are in the accepted "at risk" groups are being jabbed. We are not writing any private prescriptions for people who are more and more being termed "the worried well", as this reduces the number of jabs available for people who really need them.

The current situation has highlighted the importance of people who are in an "at risk" group getting their flu jabs as early as possible in the season. We now have a waiting list of patients who could have been jabbed three or four months ago and for whom we now can't at present get enough stock. Next year, if you are due a jab, please contact us from around mid-September onwards to book one. It might save you a nasty illness or an anxious wait.

On a more cheerful note, we've recently taken on a new secretary, and I think she ought to be our featured employee this month. Her name is Nina Marshall and she came to us from St Helena Hospice where she had been doing a similar job for the last couple of years. Prior to the Hospice, she worked at the Clacton Minor Injuries Unit, so she shouldn't have too much of a problem picking up medical terminology and all the jargon that we are guilty of slipping into occasionally.

Nina lives in Holland-on-Sea with husband Oss and their two children, George (15) and Sian (14). She seems to be a fitness fanatic and could even have been spotted running the London Marathon back in 2007. At present, her sights are set a bit lower and she is training for a half-marathon at Colchester in March, which she insists she was conned into doing.

When she isn't pounding the streets, Nina spends a lot of time running her children around. George is presently juggling GCSEs and football trials for Colchester United, whilst Sian's sport is shopping – at which Nina is sure she could represent England. It sounds as though they both rely on their part-time chauffeuse.

Apparently, Nina and Oss do occasionally get a little time to themselves, and like most true twenty-first century romantics they spend it renovating the house they bought a year or so ago. Good luck to them! And welcome to The Hollies, Nina.

It is still unclear how the coming changes to the NHS are going to affect us. However you can rest assured that we are working hard towards them. Dr Hunt and I "volunteered" to be the leads for the practice as we

head into a period of shadowing the budgets that we will have to adhere to for real in a couple of years time. I suspect that we'll be losing sleep over the whole business before long.

As part of our preparation, over the next few months, we might well be asking some of you for help or information about what has happened when you have visited hospitals or other healthcare providers. If we do, please bear with us, even if the questions seem pretty basic or stupid, as we are on a steep learning curve. Anything that we ask or do will be with the intention of improving your access to and experience of NHS care. That sounds a lofty ambition, I know, but like they say in the advert, "You're worth it."

Hugh Cronin
Practice Manager