

Surgery News

I've got a really important retirement to announce this month. Betty Harvey, who has been doing our garden "since Dr George were a lad" as they say, is hanging up her trowel some time over the summer. I'm delighted to say that she'll carry on looking after the tubs around our main entrance, but the search is on for someone to take over the rest of the job. I wonder if Sir Andrew Lloyd Webber is free to help with a few auditions.

Betty tells me that when she has all that extra time free she is going back into business on her own account, growing flowers for cutting and selling, so she won't be taking things too easy. I'm sure that she'll have plenty of customers beating a path to her door – including some of us from the surgery.

I shall miss Betty ambushing me in the car park, filling me in on what her plans for the garden are and keeping me in touch with some of the goings-on in the village. She will be an impossible act to follow and I wonder how long it will be before we stop calling her successor "The New Betty".

All this news of the new and deadly strain of E.coli emerging has rather overshadowed another more threatening and very preventable epidemic that is also starting to take lives, particularly in France so far. Measles is becoming much more common again because not enough children are being vaccinated against it.

I know it's an old story, but for several years an awful lot of parents decided not to let their children have the MMR jab due to the scare manufactured by now discredited research alleging that it was connected with autism in some way. The "evidence" of this is now known to be wrong and the original paper which presented it has been branded "deliberate fraud" by the British Medical Journal. The doctor concerned was struck off. Lower numbers of protected children mean that the wonderfully named "herd immunity" that comes with mass vaccination is not working properly, leaving many people vulnerable.

Putting it bluntly, measles kills. It can leave victims blind, deaf or brain damaged. Not a nice thought.

There are a lot of people around who aren't properly covered against it, but the good news is that the MMR jab (which also protects against mumps and rubella) is still freely available. So if you think you might need it, please ask at your surgery. The staff there will be able to check your records and book you in for a jab if necessary. Remember that you might survive measles unscathed if you get it, but it is incredibly contagious and you need to consider what might happen to the people you infect along the way.

Back to E.coli. The fuss will probably be just a memory by the time you read this, but if not, the advice at the moment is that thoroughly washing fruit, vegetables, salad stuff, your hands of course and all eating tools should keep you safe.

Next, news of some changes that will be happening shortly.

Very soon, we will be wishing a fond farewell to Dr Patel who completes her time here as Registrar in early July. It has been an eventful couple of years for her, with daughter Lily's arrival interrupting her training period. However, she will be off to work at Frinton practice as a Salaried GP when Dr O'Reilly finally signs her off in a few days time. We wish her every success and happiness in her two careers – GP and mother!

The unexpected news is that we will also be losing Dr Slawson early in August as she is taking up the offer of a partnership at Wash Lane practice in Clacton. She has been with us as Salaried GP for six years and, whilst we wish her every success with her move, we will greatly miss her input and experience.

The next change to report however, brings a really good piece of news. Dr AnnMarie Hilton, our other Registrar qualifies in August, very conveniently on almost the same date as Dr Slawson leaves. We are

delighted that she has accepted the partners' invitation to replace Dr Slawson and she will be working here full-time for at least the next year. Having a ready-made replacement for Dr Slawson will make life so much easier, especially over this summer, as it will save us all the initial training and teething troubles that tend to accompany the arrival of a new doctor. Dr Hilton will slip seamlessly into place – although I suppose we'll have to find someone new to take over her duties on the washing-up rota.

Next month I'll tell you about our new Registrar (only one this time). She is Dr Subha Nambi who will join us early in August. If her name seems vaguely familiar, it's not surprising, as she is married to Dr Arul Nambi who did part of his Registrar training with us about three years ago. He then also helped out as holiday relief last summer. Anyway, the new Dr Nambi's full details will follow in the August magazine.

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