

## Surgery News

I have a note in my diary for this month's Surgery News which now looks far too optimistic. I must have put it in there during the good old days of drought and heat-wave – back around March I suppose. The subject? "Sun awareness and skin cancer". Perhaps that means that the gloomy and gruesome spell of weather that we are suffering at present is all my fault. Anyway, having spent months in training I'm just going to get on and do it – even if it does result in the wettest Summer Olympics ever.

Amazing though it might seem, skin cancer is very common in the UK. It has been known for a long time that it is often triggered by sunburn or excessive tanning, and I suppose that as we *think* we never see much of the sun in this country, we get a bit blasé about it. If you're anything like me, several times a year you will find yourself outdoors playing sport, or just out for a walk, and suddenly realise that suntan lotion and sunglasses would actually have been a very good plan. We seem to have this strange notion that "catching the sun" is a good thing. It's true that we need sunshine to stay properly healthy, but sunburn is a definite health risk. Don't forget that it's not just full sun that will burn you. It's very easy to get caught out by hazy sunshine. A hat and a decent sun cream are sound investments, even in the good old UK.

One thing that certainly isn't a good investment from a health point of view is time on a sunbed. There's a really good website [www.sunsmart.org.uk](http://www.sunsmart.org.uk) which is worth a look if you are thinking of using one. If it doesn't put you off, it jolly well should.

Whilst on the subject, if skin cancer is spotted and treated early, lives are saved. If, over a period of weeks or months you notice changes to a mole, or develop a patch of abnormal skin, please come and get it checked out by a doctor. Most changes are not cancer, but a bit of caution might just save you major problems.

It's a bit of a tenuous link, but that leads me on to sick-notes, or, as they are now called "Statements of fitness to work" or "fit notes". For some reason, these days we seem to get more people asking for these before they can legally be completed, or when we don't even know that they are unfit for work. Inevitably, this causes everyone concerned hassle and stress.

The rule about certificates covering absence from work are still the same. Legally, your first seven calendar days should be dealt with using a self-certification form, which you get from your employer. Your doctor won't issue a fit note for those seven days. If your employer demands one, then he or she has to pay for a private certificate, which can be complicated as well as costly.

After the seventh day, a fit note can be issued if you still can't work due to illness or injury. Your doctor won't issue it in advance though, so please don't ask. Also, the doctor is making a legal statement that you are unable to work, so don't be surprised if you are told that you have to be seen before a fit note (or a continuation) is produced. Incidentally, if you are unfit for work due to a hospital operation, the hospital is responsible for issuing your first fit note, not the surgery, so don't forget to ask for one when you are discharged.

Still on dates, I have mentioned before how we and the local pharmacies are getting busier and busier with repeat prescriptions. Both our prescription issuers at the surgery and staff at the Green Pharmacy here in Great Bentley have asked me to request your help with making their job a little easier. Firstly, when you put your repeat form in, please would you say on there which day or date you need your medication – especially if you want it delivered. Secondly, if you are requesting a delivery, please ensure that someone is going to be there to receive it.

Pharmacies are generally very happy to provide a delivery service but I understand that the number of people who simply aren't at home when delivery is attempted is becoming a real problem. I'm afraid that people making deliveries are not allowed to just push medication through letter boxes if nobody is around.

Finally, if you can avoid the busiest days for delivery – Thursday and Friday – it will help the delivery staff enormously. They are sometimes out very late on those days and we'd like to spread their load a bit if we can.

Hugh Cronin  
Practice Manager, Great Bentley Surgery