

Surgery News

I haven't done the "featured employee" bit for a while and it just happens that I have a good excuse to introduce you to Georgia Opperman this month, so here goes.

Georgia started with us in October last year, initially on a temporary contract, doing mainly reception work but with a few added bits of administration. With her strong background in customer services (she came with NVQs and very good references from Capita Insurance Services for whom she worked for several years) it was no surprise when she settled rapidly into the job and soon became an essential part of the team. As a result, I am delighted to say that we have just made her contract permanent.

Like many of our staff, Georgia is very much a local girl, having been born in Clacton and raised in Tendring. She now lives with four year old son Harry in Frinton – outside the gates, she is very quick to point out. Her parents on the other hand live inside the gates, which Georgia says is nowhere near as much fun.

Even with Harry taking up most of her non-working time, Georgia still puts her main hobby down as "being sociable". She enjoys sailing and swimming, as well as going to the pub – on the odd occasion that Harry gives her permission. She also retains a love of dance and theatre, even though her days of appearing in amateur shows in Clacton are a little behind her now.

Hopefully, now that she's on the permanent staff, we will have Georgia as part of the team for a good few years.

I mentioned last month the importance of children being fully protected against measles by the MMR jab. Measles is in the news again with doubts being expressed about achieving the aim of eliminating the disease throughout Europe by 2015. Experts still believe that it could be completely eliminated worldwide – just as smallpox was in the 1980s – but only if the take-up of the vaccine is high enough.

At the moment, because of inadequate take-up of MMR, Britain is a stumbling-block to this lofty aim along with countries such as Turkey, Ukraine and Romania. Surely we can do better? If, over the next couple of years, everyone takes responsibility for their role in getting rid of measles for good it could be done. Then there would be one less disease to vaccinate against and a lot fewer damaged children in the world.

By coincidence, the government has very recently announced two welcome new additions to the childhood immunisations schedule.

Firstly, from July, a campaign will start to vaccinate babies against rotavirus, which has been in the news recently as a very common and potentially serious large bowel infection. A course of two oral doses of vaccine will be offered, the first at two months and the second four weeks later. These tie in with the first and second routine childhood immunisations, so they don't entail an extra trip to the surgery.

The second change is the gradual extension of flu immunisation to all children aged two to sixteen years. Full details have not yet been announced, but it starts in the autumn of 2013 when flu jabs will be offered to a limited age range of pre-school-aged children. Other age groups will be included over the next few years.

Parents – please do take advantage of these new vaccines' availability. Like measles, rotavirus and flu are both nasty diseases which can have serious consequences, so they are well worth avoiding.

There is also a change that affects older people, who in future will be offered vaccination against shingles as they turn seventy. This campaign, plus a "catch-up" exercise for people aged 71-79 will start in September this year.

I must admit, I had no idea before details of this campaign came out how serious shingles can be for older people. There are pretty hair-raising details on the "NHS Choices" website about a number of complications that can arise, some of them extremely painful, even needing hospitalisation in certain cases. The jab looks a very good option to me, so when it is offered I would certainly take advantage of it.

Finally for this month, the pharmacy staff have asked me to give again their e-mail address so that patients wanting the next batch of their Repeat Dispensing medication can request it direct. The address, which somehow got corrupted in some magazines when I gave it a couple of months ago, is thegreenpharmacy@intraparm.com. Please use e-mail rather than trying to telephone your request otherwise the 'phone lines just get overwhelmed.

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