

Surgery News

It feels as though I'm always asking for help these days and I'm afraid that this month is no exception. The good news is though, is that I'm not asking anyone to change the times that they ring the surgery or to part with any money. I'm asking for volunteers who are willing to become part of the practice's very first Patient Participation Group, which we hope will come up with feedback and ideas that will help us shape the future direction of the surgery over the next few years.

The first thing to say is that there is no intention that this group will take up much of anyone's time – and that includes the doctors and me. We aren't intending to hold formal meetings, either in or out of surgery hours. What we want to try, is sending out brief consultation documents or questionnaires on specific subjects, preferably by e-mail, but possibly in a few cases by post, to people who are genuinely interested in giving some thought to the occasional issue which directly impacts on everyone using the surgery.

We need to recruit a true cross-section of the population we look after, including people not only from Great Bentley but from the other villages which we serve. We want teenagers, single and married people, parents both young and middle aged, as well as older folk, including pensioners. We need participants who have chronic diseases such as asthma or diabetes, alongside others who consider themselves to be fit and well, perhaps only using us for travel jabs or the occasional dose of antibiotics. Hopefully, we'll get a few unemployed patients taking part, as well as people doing a range of jobs, either professional or manual, full- or part-time.

If you are interested – and I reiterate that this will take up a few minutes of your time just a few times a year – please either e-mail me at postmaster.gp-f81021@nhs.net or write to me at the surgery, telling me enough about yourself to enable me put together a good mixture of people. Hopefully, I'll have enough volunteers to put out the first survey sometime late in November. What will it cover? I confess I have no idea as yet. If you can suggest something when you contact me, all the better.

With darker days and slippery roads not far off now, it's time to remind everyone who drives to the surgery how dangerous the little lane in front of the building can be. Please don't forget that many elderly and not terribly sprightly people have to use the lane, some in wheelchairs, along with mums with small children and an assortment of people who are off in another world, either because they are not feeling well, or because that's just the way they are. Please drive slowly and watch out for pedestrians. If it is dark or even just gloomy, don't forget to use your lights so that everyone can see you coming.

A similar plea for care and common sense goes out to all pedestrians. It's best to avoid walking on the road if you possibly can, especially if it is slippery. If you have small children with you, please make sure they are under control at all times – not running on ahead. If you know you are going to be on the lane in the dark or in poor visibility, how about wearing something that will make you easy to see? Car drivers can feel under the weather and let their concentration lapse too, and knowing that it's not your own fault as you disappear under someone's wheels isn't going to be much of a consolation.

We've had a few problems recently with people parking rather selfishly and it would be good if everyone would spare other people a little thought when they leave their cars. For example please don't park across the footpath that runs through from Forge Lane to the main door of the surgery. Wheelchair users regularly come via that route, and if it's blocked they have to go the long way round by the road, which is not very safe. Similarly, it would help if you didn't park across the ramp at the entrance to the pharmacy. Finally, please respect our neighbours' rights of access. In particular, please avoid obstructing the driveway to the "The Poplars", right next to the surgery entrance. Mr & Mrs Hicks are very tolerant of the activity and congestion around them but even their patience must be tried on the odd occasion when someone is totally inconsiderate and leaves a vehicle completely blocking them in.

Finally, my colleagues at the pharmacy have asked me to apologise on their behalf for the alarm problems they had had there recently. The control panel went wrong and initial attempts at repairs only made the situation worse. They believe that everything is now sorted and want to say that they are extremely sorry for the disturbances that neighbours had to endure. If there are any further problems – and hopefully there won't be – please don't hesitate to let the superintendent pharmacist know.

Hugh Cronin
Practice Manager