

Surgery News

It's the flu jab season again, so if you are due a free one – most of you who are will already know it – book your appointment, roll up your sleeve and let's get you protected. Anyone aged 65 or over on 31st March 2014 is on our hit-list, as are people (including children from 6 months upwards) with a variety of chronic diseases.

Also this year, all other children born between 2nd September 2009 and 1st September 2011 are entitled to vaccination, though this will be via a nasal spray rather than a jab. This is the first step in the government's efforts to get all children aged 2 to 16 years vaccinated each year. If you think you or members of your family might be eligible, you can check on the NHS website, www.nhs.uk, or our own, www.greatbentleysurgery.nhs.uk, or you can enquire here at the surgery.

September also saw the start of a new campaign to get all people aged 70 or over vaccinated against shingles. It isn't practical to jab everyone in a single year, so this year the target groups are people born between 2nd September 1942 – 1st September 1943, and those with dates of birth 2nd September 1933 – 1st September 1934. We will be sending out invitations, and if you get one, please take us up on it.

If anyone thought that all the changes here at "The Hollies" had finished, I'm sorry to disappoint you but there are still more to report. The most significant is that Dr Cavenagh retired completely at the end of August, having worked as a part-time Salaried GP since he gave up his partnership early in January. Looking back on what I wrote for "Surgery News" around that time, I realise I never really said much about his career here – presumably because we expected him to be around much longer in his new role. I am delighted to put that right this month.

Nick Cavenagh had been with us even longer than Dr Hunt, having started in the old surgery way back in May 1984 – that's twenty-nine years, man and boy. When he arrived, Margaret Thatcher was Prime Minister, the Berlin Wall was still standing, Australia held The Ashes and, quite appropriately, Lionel Richie was number one in the charts with "Hello".

Since 1984 Dr Cavenagh has been the practice's main ideas and business man, and its lead on medicines management. As such, as well as being the driving force behind many innovations and improvements here at "The Hollies", he steered us through all sorts of health scares, some serious and others pretty silly – remember AIDS, Sars, Pandemic Flu, Mad Cow Disease, Edwina Currie and her rotten eggs? Well he survived the lot, and one of the least known facts about him is that in his whole working life he never took a single day off sick – not one!

I have a sneaking feeling that old stories about NC's ability to raise pets from the dead were probably urban myth – or should that be "rural myth" in Great Bentley's case? However, one thing is certain – many patients, me included, have benefitted from his undoubted medical skills, sharp mind and seemingly inexhaustible patience.

It's a shame I couldn't give you more notice that Dr Cavenagh was going so soon, as it would have meant that many people who wished to say a proper "goodbye" would have had the opportunity to do so, but I know that he wants to wish all his old friends well and thank everyone who helped to make his long career here so happy and rewarding.

Getting away from the sentimental stuff for the moment – I'll report on other comings and goings next month – I've been asked to remind everyone about a couple of things.

Firstly if you have more than one problem to discuss with a doctor or nurse, please remember to tell the receptionist when you make your appointment so that you can be allotted extra time. We find the main cause of GPs in particular running late is patients with shopping lists of issues they want to talk about. This leads to

inconvenience, frustration and annoyance as people following on are delayed. The doctors are perfectly happy to deal with extra problems if they are forewarned and more time has been set aside, but if you don't let us know beforehand, they might well have to cut you off in full-flow and ask you to return another day to finish your list.

Secondly, if you feel that a few words of advice from a GP or nurse might help you avoid a trip into the surgery, please ask about booking a telephone appointment. Especially over the winter, it might save you exposure to various germs lurking in the waiting room, not to mention travelling and waiting time.

Hugh Cronin, Great Bentley Surgery