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## THE SANDRINGHAM PRACTICE

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### NEWSLETTER FOR PATIENTS AUGUST 2008

Hello once again, and here's hoping that the weather in August makes up for the rather abysmal weather we have had in June and partly July. Mind you at the practice, we do prefer it on the cool side as the building is absolutely stifling when the sun is out in the summer, but those of you who have already had your holidays we hope they were enjoyable for you. For those about to go on holiday especially in hot climates make sure that you pack the high factor sun screen and for those staying at home enjoying a barbeque make sure the meat is well cooked.

#### STAFF

Things have been pretty stable on the staff front since I last wrote, the only forthcoming change is our current registrar, Dr Anna Kirkman leaving us to do her hospital rota jobs and we welcome back Dr Craig Gordon on August 6<sup>th</sup>. He will be in his final six months with us before becoming a fully fledged GP. Anna has shown she is an excellent doctor and we look forward to her return in a couple of years or so. A couple of our more recent registrars are doing well, Dr Okeleke is now the senior GP at his practice in Auckley and Dr Taz Thaver is now a partner at the Rossington practice. It is always great to see young doctors who we have trained at the practice being successful in their careers.

#### THE BUILDING

Following further discussions with the PCT led by our Practice Manager Mr Langthorp and senior partner Dr Love emphasis has more recently been placed on keeping the grounds of the building tidy. It was certainly good to arrive at my usual time of 7.25 the other morning to find gardeners hard at work. Unfortunately some of the walls on the patient corridor are beginning to look a bit scuffed - please take care with your wheelchairs and scooters. It is a shame to see an increasing number of marks and dents on the corridor walls.

In preparation for our extended hours opening (more of which later) the PCT will be installing more CCTV cameras to improve security for patients who attend and for staff who work in the Sandringham Centre. It is now two years since we moved in and certainly it is very good to work in a modern building with more space than we had before. However I do rather miss our old single storey building with its homely waiting room and still have vivid memories of the bulldozer crashing through the walls of my office a couple of years ago one sunny morning.

## EXTENDED OPENING HOURS

The practice first expressed an interest in opening longer hours last autumn though the primary care trust (PCT) initially were unable to address our security concerns over the ensuing months. In April this year nearly 200 of our patients helped in identifying whether there was a need for extending our opening hours and also helped guide us to when any additional hours were preferred. Whilst over 72% of patients were satisfied with the existing opening times we recognise that some would like to see the practice offering appointments outside the current surgery times. In particular we are thinking of those who work away or those who work substantial hours during the week and whose jobs do not allow them to attend during weekday hours. Almost half of the patients who requested extended hours wish to see these provided on a Saturday morning with a little over a third looking at evening extension and the remainder earlier in the morning.

The PCT has laid down several regulations regarding extended hours and in all honesty some of their decisions have had us baffled. We were initially intending to start opening extra hours one evening a week and on some Saturday mornings as early as July but with the security issues dragging on this has not been possible. We would have liked to open earlier on a couple of mornings each week as well but the PCT regulations have meant this cannot happen. We do recognise that whilst the PCT is funding extra opening hours across the district they obviously feel that they need to have the same instructive guidelines for all practices who wish to extend their hours. Accordingly we have been quite dismayed by some of the decisions enforced upon us but we are hopefully in the last stages of negotiations on this subject.

The provision across the district is that the extra opening hours would allow for appointments with GPs only. There will be no nursing appointments and no clinics running such as asthma or heart health. There will be no capability of having blood tests taken at these appointments either. However it will allow people as I have already said who have problems attending because of work the capability of seeing a GP in an evening and at a weekend. When everything is finalised we will publish details on our practice website and in the form of handouts etc within the practice.

## NON-ATTENDERS

If you have managed to survive this Newsletter so far well done! I now bring you the rather disturbing news that in the last 12 months 1,750 appointments were missed by patients at the practice. We refer to these as DNA's (did not attend), 905 of these were for doctor appointments, 845 were for nurse appointments. This amounts to a current appointment rate of  $12\frac{1}{4}$  days of wasted appointments. As we have said before persistent offenders will be required to leave the practice and warning letters are already sent out. Our wish is that like the dentist we could fine people for this but then perhaps I am just getting to be a grumpy old man.

## MAMMOGRAPHY

We have mass screening mammography for those ladies between 50 and 65 once every three years. We are informed that this will take place this autumn and we would urge all

ladies to take part in this very successful programme for identifying breast cancer at the earliest stage possible, this screening programme has been an NHS success story and long may it continue to be so. Again aimed at our good lady patients, cervical smear uptake numbers has now dropped below 80%, there is no doubt again that cervical cytology screening has reduced the number of deaths from cervical cancer very impressively and as a practice we would urge all women to have cervical smears done when they are called to do so by the recall system. If you have any doubts about the screening programmes then please discuss with your GP or nurse.

And lastly on cancer screening, the Department of Health has rolled out screening tests for colon cancer and kits are being sent out to those aged 60 or over for testing. Colon cancer is very difficult to diagnose and so if a screening test can help in any way then once more we would urge anyone who is sent a testing kit to partake in the screening programme.

### PRACTICE PHARMACIST

Kemi Daniels has been with us for a few years now and she joins us every Tuesday all day. She is very skilled at medication reviews and can answer all types of questions on prescribing and prescriptions. If the receptionists suggests you see Kemi for a medication review then this is because we would like you to do so. She supports us in our prescribing and also helps us with audit work helping us check on our prescribing trends. Hers is an important role. It is over 10 years now since Doncaster introduced in-house practice pharmacists and we were one of the pioneering practices. Unfortunately everyone wants to experience a good thing and so the few in-house practice pharmacists we have in the district have now had to be shared amongst all the practices around Doncaster. There have been many times over the years when we have pioneered things here at the Sandringham Practice only to find that others want a share of our good ideas.

### DENTISTS

Dr Love and I have had our fair share of dental problems in recent times and we are lucky because we have access to dental care. Perhaps it's all the gnashing of our teeth at our administrative overlords that have caused our dental problems, I know the PCT are encouraging or trying to attract dentists to the area. If you have a problem finding a dentist then you must approach the Primary Care Trust through its Patient Advice and Liaison Service in the Colonnades. GP's are not meant to treat dental problems - we have not got the expertise.

And finally, I bet you thought I had forgotten, but just to say how proud I am of my beloved Doncaster Rovers and what a fantastic occasion Wembley was. As for the championship..... bring it on!!! Enjoy the rest of the summer.

Cheers for now.

**DR K B SYKES**