

Practice Newsletter

Saying Goodbye and Hello

It is with great sadness that we are saying goodbye to our Senior Partner, Dr Sue Brocklesby, who retired after 32 years as a GP, 19 of which have been at Blackdown. She will be greatly missed by patients and everyone at the Practice but we hope to see her for the odd locum session here and there.

Dr Brocklesby's patients will be transferred to Drs Spicer, Sherwin and **our new Partner, Dr Thomas Winter, who will be joining us on the 22 of October.**

We have had a lot of comings and goings over the last few years but have been very fortunate to recruit excellent doctors at a time when many other Practices are struggling to do so.

- Drs Leach (who is now our Senior Partner) and Winter will predominantly cover Hemyock
- Drs Barnes and Parrett (nee Perry) will work between Dunkeswell and Hemyock
- Drs Spicer and Sherwin will predominantly cover Churchinford
- Dr Murray remains as versatile as ever and will be working at all three sites

Accessing appointments through an IMPROVED ACCESS SCHEME



There is a new scheme where you can access appointments to see a GP 6:30pm-8:00pm Monday to Friday and at weekends and bank holidays at Tiverton Hospital.

We had hoped that we would be able to offer late appointments for one evening a week in Hemyock with one of your usual Doctors but unfortunately we were unable to do so without jeopardising the cover of our normal surgeries across all three sites during the day. However, we are pleased to say that we are working with the excellent out of hours organisation Devon Doctors and surgeries in Cullompton, Tiverton, Bampton and Silverton, so that GP appointments are available for patients from these surgeries 6:30pm-8:00pm Monday to Friday and at weekends and bank holidays at Tiverton Hospital.

If you need an appointment with a GP 6:30pm-8:00pm Monday to Friday and over weekends and bank holidays you can telephone **the Devon Doctors Improved Access line on 01392 822354;**

this number will be available from 8am to 6.30pm between Monday and Friday and from 8am to 1pm over weekends and bank holidays. You also use this number if you wish to cancel an appointment you have made with the Devon Doctors Improved Access service.

Please note that the telephone number 01392 822354 is for the Devon Doctors service only, not the out of hours service.

If you are booking appointments at Hemyock, Churchinford and Dunkeswell Monday to Friday during the day then the telephone numbers are the usual 01823 680206, 01823 681700 or 01823 681720.

Plus on Saturdays mornings between 8:00am and 11:00am at Hemyock we are still offering a mix of routine appointments and appointments that may be booked on the day over the telephone. However, it is not clear whether this will continue when the improved access scheme is fully up and running.

FLU CLINICS

Making appointments for the flu jabs

The season is upon us where patients and staff alike roll up their sleeves and queue through the corridors to receive their flu jab. If you have received a letter from us, this means you are eligible to have a flu vaccine on the NHS.

We are sorry that this year we have needed to be so strict about vaccinating patients in clinics rather than as part of another routine appointment you may have booked. This is because the flu vaccines for patients over 65 years of age have been allocated in smaller deliveries this year and therefore we need to ensure that we have enough for each clinic booked as we go along. This is a national delivery schedule for General Practice and has been something completely out of our control.

We are hoping that there will be a more practical solution for next year.

We sent out over 3,300 letters this year. This is why during the first two weeks we had receptionists staffing a separate telephone line to make the appointments for a flu jab so that people who are unwell are able to get through on the normal numbers.

We would like to thank you if you used the 'Flu Line' to book your flu jab appointments rather than telephoning the main surgery numbers.

Thank you also for your patience because, as you will appreciate, this telephone line was very busy at times. **The 'Flu Line' is now closed.**

Dates and venues for remaining flu clinics

Dunkeswell	Thursday 25 th October – FULL
Churchinford	Thursday 15 th November
Hemyock	Saturday 17 th November
Dunkeswell	Thursday 22 nd November

Clinics times: Saturday 8:00am to 12:50pm
Thursday 2:10pm to 5:20pm.

At the time of printing this newsletter, we still have spaces in the clinics 15th, 17th and 22nd November.

If you are eligible for a flu vaccine and you have not yet booked your appointment, please phone your normal surgery to book an appointment in these clinics.



Many of you will have received fliers from this company highlighting a new pharmacy service that is available in the area. The arrival of these fliers prompted a discussion at our Practice Patient Group meeting in September.

There are very strict rules about trying to direct patients to have their prescriptions dispensed at one dispensary or pharmacy versus another and so we are unable to say exactly why dispensary services are so important to the Practice.

However, members of the Practice Patient Group wish it to be made very clear that Pharmacy2U is a completely different organisation and has nothing to do with the surgery or any of the dispensaries located at each surgery site.

The Practice takes a pride in being able to offer dispensary services as an integral part of the Practice team that coincides with clinic times across all three sites and that our staff stay until the last patient needing their medicines leaves their appointment at each site, each day.

That is not to say we do not want to continue to develop dispensary services and at the moment our Practice Manager, Karen Button, is reviewing whether robotic dispensing would be a viable option to speed up the dispensing process. She is also looking at ways patients can order and receive their medicines as conveniently as possible.

If you would like to be part of this review please contact Karen by telephoning your usual surgery number.

Attitudes towards our staff

In the Blackdowns we feel fortunate to work in a beautiful part of the world and we have lovely patients to look after and great staff to work with. However, recently we have noticed an increase in incidents where our receptionists and dispensers have been shouted at, sworn at and, in some cases, intimidated by aggressive behaviour and one member of the reception staff has left as a consequence.

The role of a doctor's receptionist has changed dramatically, so much so in fact, many practices have been renaming them patient service co-ordinators or health navigators. We haven't done this, mainly because people would say "What does that mean? Who is that? Oh you mean the receptionist!".

The receptionist role is far busier and more complicated than most people realise; they need to co-ordinate all the communication coming into the Practice, be this telephone calls, electronic documents or paperwork whilst ensuring patients get the right appointment with the clinician to meet their needs. They manage waiting lists and sort out as many administrative queries as possible leaving the clinical staff to see, speak to, or refer patients.

Everyone working at the Practice understands that when people are ill or worried about their own health or that of another they may not be themselves. However, the attitude displayed to some of our receptionists and dispensary staff over the last few weeks must not continue.

If a patient's behaviour is consistently rude or aggressive towards a member of staff then the patient may, with the appropriate warnings, be de-registered from the Practice.

If you have concerns about the attitude of a member of staff towards you then you should contact Karen Button, our Practice Manager to discuss your concerns. You can contact Karen by telephoning your usual surgery number.

Confidentiality when standing at reception

Just a reminder when standing behind someone at reception that it is polite to keep an appropriate distance and respect their privacy.

If you need to discuss a delicate matter with a receptionist you can ask to speak to them somewhere more private.

However, this can be difficult at Dunkeswell and Churchinford and/or if any of the surgeries are very busy. In these circumstances it may be more appropriate to telephone your usual surgery to discuss your requirements.

Being a Dementia Friend

This is an initiative from the Alzheimer's Society and Marie Case, our Pharmacy Technician is developing the Practice as a dementia-friendly surgery.



Anyone can become a dementia friend, the Website to register is:

<https://www.dementiafriends.org.uk/>

Locally, we have an excellent resource, the **MEMORY CAFÉ** at the Blackdown Healthy Living and Activity Centre in Hemyock.

This is a monthly drop-in group for anyone affected by memory loss providing activities and companionships with a hot lunch available – 2nd Tuesday of every month 10.30am - 1.30pm. The cost of this is £7.50 including lunch.

For more information please contact Jan (Memory Café Co-ordinator) on 01823 680687, centre@bhlac.org.uk or pop in!

Free Wi-Fi is now available

A free public NHS Wi-Fi is now available at the practice for patients to use.

To connect, make sure Wi-Fi is switch 'On' on your device (usually managed via your device settings). Look for 'NHS Wi-Fi' in the list of available networks and select it. A welcome message is displayed which includes the terms and conditions. Please read this and then press 'Continue to the Internet'. You will be taken to a NHS web-site. Select 'Done' and your connection will remain active for up to two hours.

Please remember when using the NHS Wi-Fi services do so quietly and with consideration of other people around you in the waiting room. Thank you.

Non-NHS administrative work

We realise there are times when patients ask their doctor to sign a form and/or complete paperwork. Often this is a non-NHS service and therefore a charge may apply. Sometimes someone other than your doctor may be able to sign/complete the form for you, if so, we will try to tell you as soon as possible.

For insurance and solicitors report we are trying to provide the information with 30 days. Shorter forms may not take as long but there can still be a delay if your doctor is away or the surgery is particularly busy because these type of tasks are generally not completed on a daily basis and will not be prioritised above people who are acutely unwell.

FESTIVE OPENING TIMES



Please be aware that all three surgeries will be closed on Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year's Day

Fri	21 December:	Usual site opening times.
Sat	22 December:	Open at Hemyock only between 8am-11am*
Sun	23 December:	Closed
Mon	24 December:	Usual site opening times
Tue	25 December:	Closed
Wed	26 December:	Closed
Thu	27 December:	Usual site opening times
Fri	28 December:	Usual site opening times
Sat	29 December:	Open at Hemyock only between 8am-11am*
Sun	30 December:	Closed
Mon	31 December:	Usual site opening times
Tue	01 January:	Closed
Wed	02 January:	Usual site opening times.

****This is by appointment only***, please phone before coming to the surgery as the appointments tend to go very quickly. The message directing you to telephone 111 to access the out of hours service will be activated once our appointments are full.

Opening times of pharmacies over the festive season can be found on our website below and on all the front doors of each site:

<http://www.theblackdownpractice.co.uk/>

Useful Websites

NHS choices has been completely revamped and is now <https://www.nhs.uk/>. This includes an A-Z of common conditions and medicines, how to locate an NHS service and lots of other useful health information.

Devon pinpoint <https://www.pinpointdevon.co.uk/> shows support services in the local area according to postcode.

My Health <https://myhealth-devon.nhs.uk/> provides information that is available to patients on their conditions, local healthcare services and referrals to other parts of the NHS e.g. hospitals.