**Patient Newsletter – Autumn 2021**

***Apologies to all our patients for the delay since the last patient newsletter, but please be reassured that we have been working extremely hard during the last 18 months, and everything we are doing is to deliver our statement of purpose, to provide a safe high-quality care for our patients whilst supporting our staff to achieve their full potential.***

**Covid**

Many of you will have received you first 2 COVID vaccinations with our practice (mainly at the Hinckley Leisure Centre) where we agreed to assist NHSE by completing these vaccines for all patients over 50 and also those who are clinically vulnerable. We were able to deliver some 8000 vaccines, and our team were exhausted by the time this was completed, so we decided to not opt in for the under 50’s vaccines, leaving this to local vaccination centres to vaccinate our patients whilst we tried to focus on returning to increasing demands for patient GP appointments.

We have this week been offered the opportunity to take an additional contract for the COVID Booster programme, but again after reviewing our patient needs, we have decided to opt out once again for delivering these vaccines, to concentrate all our efforts on wider access to appointments in your GP practice.

We know that all our patients will still have access to the covid booster vaccine, this can be delivered locally by trained vaccinators, but feel we as your GP practice, are the only ones who can deliver the access to our GP/ANP & Nurse appointments that you require.

I trust you all accept our patient focused decision here, to look after your general health needs, rather than taking on an additional contract which could easily be delivered by others.

Covid has not gone away, and despite less people falling seriously ill we are currently seeing an increased peak in positive staff and patients, and we as a practice need to protect everyone.

Please continue to wear a mask when entering the premises and making sure that you are distanced from other patients in our waiting area, all our staff and clinicians will be wearing masks, so expect to be challenged if not, or wait in the car and our clinicians will take alternative measures for your care if you feel you are unable to wear a mask for any reason.

Please do not book a face-to-face appointment with any covid symptoms without a negative ’PCR’ test in the last 2 days. (Lateral flow is not to be relied on)

We will continue to offer telephone triage appointments to any patients who do not need an examination, to protect both yourselves and your GP having to isolate for 10 days, and us having to cancel some 300 other patients each time.

If your condition does after explanation appear to be something that the GP does want to see you face to face for, they will of course arrange for you to come down.

As a practice we ae currently seeing 51.3% of our patients face to face, so please do not believe the press campaigns, we are still here for your care.

**Flu vaccines**

As a practice we buy and pay for your anticipated flu vaccinations 12 months in advance, so would ask you to support us to continue to do this in future years, by having your flu vaccination here at the practice rather than a local pharmacist.

We appreciate that some patients feel they are saving us the time, but this is not the case, and if our flu vaccination numbers decline and we are faced with a both financial loss and the inability to provide the vaccines in future for patients who return to us in subsequent years.

If you are over 50 this year only or over 65 every year. Or have a chronic disease that requires you have cover for influenza please book your vaccine now at our practice if you have not done so already.

Many patients have suggested waiting until they can get their covid booster and flu vaccine together, but we would suggest you do not delay and book your flu vaccine immediately (these are now readily available) rather than wait until 6 month post 2nd covid vaccine, to get your flu protection and protect your health over the Autumn/winter months.

SVHC would also like to apologise for any patients who were caught in queues for our last session, and would like to remind all patients to not arrive until their allocated time, and not park in the practice car park saving those spaces for our disabled patients. We unfortunately found many patients arrived extra early causing issues at the start of the afternoon, to secure parking for themselves.

**Appointments/access**

Whilst we have always tried to offer a same day book on the day service for all our patients, we are now faced with too many disgruntled patients annoyed with the amount of time they are holding on the telephone.

We have now decided that with immediate effect, we are going to revert to a booking service like every other local practice, where you can book your routine issues with our clinical team, for our next available appointment.

This will mean that our telephone access should improve as it will no longer be imperative to call at 8.00 a.m. on the day.

We asked patients in a survey what they would like to see and were told repeatedly that you would rather not be told to try again the following day and would be happier making an appointment in advance.

We will still offer some urgent appointments for minor illnesses on the day/following day with our ANP and save some urgent GP appointment for issues that cannot wait, but any other issues will need to now be booked with the Dr of your choice in the next available slot.

We wish we could do it all, but we can only offer a finite number of appointments (plus any urgent duty issues) and cannot meet patients demands for both a same day service and a prebook able within a couple of days service, so will need to monitor, to see how far in advance this takes our booking system.

For all patients, please consider cancelling your appointment booked in advance if your condition then becomes urgent, or you recover, as at this busy time in general practice we were still face with ‘137 did not attend’ appointments over the last 4 weeks, that if cancelled in advance could have been offered to other patients.

Please can we also ask that no patients vehicles are taken through the no entry sign at the rear of the car park. This area is not big enough for either turning or dropping off patients (wheelchairs are available at our main entrance) and we have in the last 12 months have 3 staff cars damaged when patients having been trying to turn their vehicles.

Whilst we obviously want to commit to our staff that their cars will be safe when parked at their place of work, this also has a detrimental effect on our patients when our GP cars are tied up in garages for repairs when they could be used for home visits and care home rounds.

**Staff**

*As you may be aware there have been several changes to our team over the last 18 months, and as well as having 2 GPs on maternity leave, we have been recruiting both locum cover and recruited a permanent GP Dr Mohammed Zanoun Abugazala, who has joined our team on a Thursday & Friday weekly, and Dr Mihaela Nistor, who is a full time GP joining us permanently after recently completing the GP registrar training programme.*

**General Practice – A Profession in Crisis…**

Nationally and locally, we are currently under exceptional pressure as patient demand is rising and Governmental Incentives mean our workload is increasing as we take on more clinical cases that would have been traditionally dealt with by hospital consultants. There is a severe shortage of GPs, and we know there is a high level of burnout amongst the profession and practice staff. A high percentage of GPs coming towards the end of their working life are planning to retire early due to the pressures, and recruitment onto the GP training schemes is challenging.

At Station View each GP is working of average 50 hours a week (even the part time GPs). To ensure we continue providing the high-level service we are known and respected for. We are trying to modernise the way we work by utilising the most appropriate clinician for each case. The nursing team are crucial in this as they are highly experienced in General Practice conditions, our Advanced Nurse Practitioners are very experienced in minor conditions that do not need to see a GP.

We are strengthening our admin and managerial staff due to the demands being placed upon the surgery. Please trust us that we are working exceptionally hard to continue to work as well as possible in the current circumstances. We want to continue to provide a local service run with the best interests of our patients at its core.