



# The Swanage Medical Practice

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Issue No.5

**Welcome to our Spring Newsletter!** At this time of year our thoughts often turn to clearing out the cobwebs from our homes & lives. Turning over a new leaf is a universal theme that inspires us too! With this in mind we are using this issue to inform and up-date you with useful clinic information that explains the importance of you taking an active role in your own health and relationship with the Practice.

## 21st Century technology has arrived at Swanage Surgery!

You will by now have noticed the two new screens in our waiting areas. Partly funded by SCHeME and The Doctors (own funds) we are very pleased to have been able to update our 'Call System' and the way we can impart invaluable advice to patients. We hope that you find the information broadcast helpful.

## Child Health— Registering Newborns

We've a problem at this practice with newborns not being registered as quickly as we'd like. It is **really important** to register your baby with a GP as early as possible post birth, in case you need their help. If you aren't able to come in with the registration form, perhaps another family member or friend can do so for you. It is very rare, but new born children can develop complications unexpectedly, which require urgent action from a GP. Please consider this a priority; you'll have been given a registration form by your Health Visitor.

*Thank you.*

**The advantages of child immunisation** - You may not like your baby/child having an injection but vaccination is a vital step in protecting your child from serious & potentially fatal diseases. Vaccinations are quick, safe & effective. Once vaccinated against a disease, a child's body can fight it more effectively. If all children are vaccinated this lowers the chance of a disease outbreak in Swanage & beyond. The only time that it's safe to stop vaccinating children against an illness is when the disease has been wiped out worldwide. E.g., when every country had eliminated smallpox in 1979, vaccination against the disease was stopped. It's hoped that polio will soon be eradicated & that measles will follow. Concerns that too many vaccines at a young age can 'overload' your child's immune system are not the case. Studies have shown that vaccines don't weaken a child's immune system. The bacteria & viruses used in vaccines are weakened or killed, & there are far fewer of them than the natural bugs that babies & children come into contact with. In fact, if a child was given 11 vaccines all at once, it would only use a thousandth of their immune system! So please consider very carefully the benefits of having your child vaccinated, as the consequences don't just affect your child, but the wider community too.

## Early morning appointments for working patients

As part of our ongoing review of appointment availability some of the GPs have introduced early morning appointments on Fridays from 7.10 to 7.40am. This is in addition to the Saturday surgeries that we have been running for some years. We have been very encouraged by the uptake & positive feedback so far.

## Women's Health

### Cervical screening (previously known as smear test)

You will have seen in the media lately that nationally there has been a significant drop in the number of women attending cervical screening appointments. This has affected us locally too. The aim of the NHS Cervical Screening Programme is to reduce the number of women who develop cervical cancer and the number of women who die from the condition. All women registered with a GP are invited for the screening. It is offered every three years between the ages of 25 & 49, & every five years between the ages of 50 & 64. Most women's test results show that everything is normal, but for around 1 in 20 women the test shows some abnormal changes. Being screened regularly means any abnormal changes in the cells of the cervix can be identified at an early stage and, if necessary, treated to stop cancer developing. Screening is a personal choice and you have the right to choose not to attend, but the GPs here strongly advise that take up the offer of screening. **It can mean the difference of life or death.**

### Domestic Violence

It has recently been reported to the Surgery that incidents of domestic violence have increased in the Purbeck area. The number we normally provide for assistance, for men as well as women, is the Domestic Violence Freephone helpline: **0808 2000 247 (24 hours)**. We also stress that if you are experiencing abuse, please also consider talking to a health professional here at the Surgery. Don't suffer alone, we are here to help you. Please don't wait until you are in crisis.

**Locum Doctors** - From time to time it is necessary for us to make use of Locum GPs. The definition of Locum is *a person who temporarily fulfils the duties of another*. We've noticed that some patients believe these Doctors to be inferior or not fully trained and "won't understand my case". We can assure you however that a Locum Doctor has the same skills and training as the GP partners at this surgery - otherwise they would not be permitted to practice as GPs. It is a great shame to turn down an appointment with an experienced Doctor over a misconception.

**Sit & Wait Surgery Update** - These twice daily surgeries, open between 9am to 10.30am and 3pm to 4pm, are available to patients with current problems that can't wait for routine face to face or telephone appointments. The reception team receive a lot of complaints about the length of these surgeries. We are very aware that the wait can sometimes be long but the GPs would like to stress that the consultations are conducted as quickly as **patient safety** allows. The Duty Doctors are also responsible for undertaking urgent home visits which will increase waiting times too. You may not be aware but for minor ailments, there are lots of other local services that you can go to directly for timely help; please pick up a leaflet from the Surgery for advice on what is available and where. This may help you and ease the burden on the Sit & Wait Surgery.

**Day in the life of the Day of The Reception Manager** Hello, I am Sara Ward, and I've worked at Swanage Medical Practice since moving to Swanage from London 23 years ago. I have had a variety of roles & presently lead the busy team of 13 ladies who undertake the diverse range of work in reception. I record & approve staff annual leave, organise appropriate cover & update the staff rota. I also help with the everyday queries of the team & patients, along with those from the local chemists, hospitals, health centres & solicitors. I'm responsible for the booking of medical examination appointments & health checks for patients.

I am a member of the appointment sub-committee, which meets on a quarterly basis to discuss the current system and make any suggested recommendations. I then help to add the quarterly appointments for the GPs onto the computer system.

Aside from reception, I record all financial matters, as appropriate, on the Practice accounts system and check bank statements, remittances & other payments. I invoice patients & companies for insurance reports, letters etc. & record bills that come into the Practice for Gas, Electricity, Council Tax, medical supplies etc.

My other responsibilities include: Assisting the Practice manager with the staff salaries, arranging educational evening meetings for the Practice staff and those at local Health Centres, attending quarterly meetings which deal with significant events that have occurred at the Practice; to discuss how we can learn from any incidents, undertaking the administration for all research programs within the Practice, running the annual flu clinics.

Reception is extremely busy, but we all work exceptionally well together & strive to provide a good service for our patients. I am proud to manage such a hardworking and enthusiastic team.

**What is SCHeME?** Swanage Community Health Medical Equipment (SCHeME) a registered charity, has been operating since 1995. It was set up to buy new equipment used by members of the Swanage Primary Healthcare Team to care for people in their homes, or to provide diagnostic or preventative equipment. The equipment may be specialised and not always available on the NHS. Examples of equipment purchased are syringe drivers for administering pain relief & pressure relieving mattresses and cushions. Our team would gladly give a talk to your organisation on 'Care in the Community'. Donations from patients or their families, who have had their suffering alleviated by the team, are always welcome. Further information about SCHeME's work is available from Barbara Cousins here at the Surgery, telephone 01929 422231.

***The GP Partners & staff are extremely grateful to SCHeME for their continued support & providing our reception desk with a 'hearing loop' to improve audibility for the hard of hearing.***

**Swanage Area Dementia Friendly Community** - Why did we decide to focus on dementia? Through the work of Wayfinders & Purbeck Good Neighbours it was obvious there was an enormous lack of understanding for people living with dementia in the community. Dementia Action Alliance gave us the opportunity to make Swanage & the surrounding area into a dementia friendly community. We've been supported by the Town Council, Swanage Library, Senior Forum, Rotary, POPP, Sign & Print, Regency Dentists, Pursenalities, Royal Oak, Mayday Singers, Harmony Rocks & Swanage Medical Centre. This support has enabled us to canvass all Swanage businesses offering free dementia awareness sessions delivered by Dementia Champions – which are ongoing. We've also been able to start a Singing for Pleasure group & we're developing more advanced sessions on dementia to help more families. Our hub at Swanage Library is open to anyone seeking further help. As medical diagnosis is confidential we hope 'word of mouth' will ensure our knowledge will really help all those who need love & understanding. We celebrate our first year with a party in May at the Purbeck House Hotel – by kind permission of the owners as a memorial to one of their family.

For further info. contact Jean Gibbs 01929-425521

**Staff Antics...** Medical Secretaries Vernita & Paula recently had brilliant fun doing the Dance for Life at the BIC with Peter Kay in aid of Cancer research & raised £130! Some of the Reception team are in training for The Race for Life 5k in June in aid of Cancer Research. ***The Practice would like to thank the organisers of The Purbeck Rally who kindly donated £500 to Cancare and £250 to The Friends of the Practice. We are very grateful for their support.***

### Answers to Frequently asked questions

**Q. Why do I have to pay for some Doctor's letters and forms to be filled in?**

**A.** The reason that patients have to pay for non-clinical paperwork is that the NHS do not cover the cost for this sort of work. GPs provide general medical services. Letters & forms for patients for third parties are not a health service. The money charged is not money for the Doctor's pocket but for the gross turnover of the practice. To clarify: it takes time for the receptionist to deal with the initial enquiry; then time for the GP to check the patient record and then dictate the letter or fill in the form; the letter is then typed by a secretary; and the patient contacted again by a receptionist to arrange collection—all this 'time' uses practice resources. Any 'time' and overheads that the practice uses, that is not part of the NHS has to be recouped from somewhere—i.e., from the patient that has generated the extra workload. What people don't realise is that even for a one-line letter the General Medical Council requires that a GP verify that what they say and sign is true. That means a time-consuming trawl through a patient's medical notes. So the simplest letter can take sometime and several people to generate. Your surgery's resources are finite & cannot be used for non NHS work without reimbursement.

**Q. Why won't you speak to me about the health of my Wife, Husband, Partner, 16 + year old child?**

**A.** Confidentiality is central to the development of trust between doctors and patients. Patients must be able to expect that information about their health is kept private. It is both a professional and legal requirement. Being a wife, partner or parent of an 'of age' child doesn't override this principle. If you are in a situation where sharing of information is necessary; if you are a carer for a spouse for example; your spouse can write a letter to the surgery confirming that we are permitted to discuss their needs with you. So please don't harangue the staff when they won't divulge information to you. It is a legal requirement that they don't.

**Have your say:** If you have any comments or feedback about our services, please use the 'Friends & Family Test' touch screen in the waiting room & we can respond to the queries raised via this newsletter. Your opinions are of great value to us & can sometimes lead to change within our practice. For major concerns & queries please contact Natasha Ritchie, Practice Manager or speak to your GP.

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Next Issue: June 2016