

Message from Swanage Medical Practice, Dr Jason Clark, Senior Partner

To all patients, staff and friends of Swanage Medical Practice

Having worked and lived in Swanage for over 30 years we are now facing a challenge unimaginable even 3 weeks ago. The Corona virus is spreading, and we are currently still on the same track as Italy was 2 weeks ago. Unfortunately, it is from those that caught the virus last weekend that the deaths in 10 days' time will come. I fear it is too late to stop us reaching the number of deaths Italy has recently been having.

Fortunately, our Prime Minister has now put in place measures that should start to reduce deaths in 2 weeks' time, by preventing the spread of the virus now from asymptomatic or moderately affected individuals to the healthy and vulnerable members of the population.

If this contact is reduced the deaths and virus will stop. China managed it and so can we so long as we all stay at home.

Essential travel and contact must be interpreted with new meaning, it is your parents and vulnerable individuals that are put at risk if we don't. This is of extreme relevance to Swanage due to a very high proportion of older residents, the number of care homes and our local hospital.

Make use of phones, Whatsapp, video calls, and Zooma to keep in touch with your loved ones. My mother, due her 90th birthday this week, despite early memory problems, has now mastered video and group video calls so she can see us, and us her, as she cuts into her cake. Try to nominate just one family member to provide care support for a period, then change to another member, to reduce the number of different contacts they have.

So how is the surgery planning to cope with the imminent pandemic?

I would like to thank the town's understanding so far, although the footfall in the practice has almost ceased, we are still very busy looking after patients:

- We are introducing new ways to provide care to patients.
- We are not offering routine face to face or the ability to book appointments online during this pandemic.
- **We are encouraging use of e-consultations via our website (E-Consult).** This asks a series of questions about your specific problem and how you want it solved. Your doctor or most appropriate staff member will then assess the information you provide. We will get back to you within 48 hours, either by email, text, or phone, with a response. The response may well be a telephone or video consultation, advice, signposting, or a prescription going to the chemist. A face to face appointment can be considered at this point.
- **We are encouraging the use of online access to your record.** This will enable you to request repeat and other medications, see results, and exactly what repeat medications you should have. We currently need proof of identity at the surgery to set this up for you but are working on a way to do this remotely.
- **We are telephone triaging all GP appointments and will only ask you to come to the surgery if necessary.**
- We are trailing video consultations where appropriate.

I think this is all starting to work well, however the practice is still struggling with **incoming calls exceeding capacity and dealing with repeat and other medication queries** (as are the chemists).

Excess phone calls

This is being compounded by increasing numbers of staff having to self-isolate and increasing call volumes.

- We have been advised we should **not** be dealing with the worried well, please see NHS 111 online guidance on how to deal with mental health issues.
- We are **not** issuing sick notes for those self-isolating, please see the NHS 111 website.
- We should **not** be dealing with advice on if you should isolate or not, please see national guidance (via link on our website).
- At present we **cannot see or treat** any patient with Covid 19, please follow NHS 111 online protocol for when you should call them, this is usually when your activity is being affected by the disease. We have no treatments to stop anyone getting the disease or it progressing to pneumonia. However, at that stage antibiotics and ventilation can be lifesaving.

All of the above links can be found on our website <https://www.swanagemedical.org.uk/pages/Coronavirus-Support>

Please try to consider all the above before you call the surgery to keep the **lines open for those who can't manage new technology, and emergency communication.**

Prescriptions

At present 80 percent of all prescription requests come in on a piece of paper either direct from the patient or you have asked a chemist to send that piece of paper to us on your behalf. **Neither us nor the chemists now have the resources to continue this.**

Every item on every piece of paper then must be transcribed manually onto the computer then the doctor asked to sign before passing back electronically to the chemist. Each piece of paper represents a **hazard** to the person receiving it and the people giving and delivering it.

Online requesting as mentioned above cuts out the chemist, the paper and the receptionist. Your request for exactly what you need goes straight to the doctor electronically.

Electronic Repeat Dispensing (ERD)

If you are not yet signed up for online requesting, ERD is what I would like all our patients to be signed up to after their next repeat prescription.

- Via ERD, instead of just issuing a single repeat prescription, we issue however many repeat prescriptions are needed for the next 6 to 12 months.
- These are then sent electronically to your chemist who prints out the first one and gives it to you.
- The rest sit in a central reserve (spine) and the chemist automatically calls the next one down and gets it ready a week before you need it, no more phone calls or bits of paper for 6 to 12 months.
- Also, if a medication is stopped, that item is deleted from those prescriptions waiting on the spine.
- If ERD has been set up for you, this should be apparent on your repeat slip.

You can sign up for online prescriptions rather than ERD. However, we need proof of identity to set this up for you and during the coronavirus outbreak we do not want anyone coming to the surgery for routine request. We are working on a way check your ID remotely during the pandemic and will advertise this in due course – please keep checking our website news page for Practice updates www.swanagemedical.org.uk

Finally, very many thanks for reading all of this and your help in changing the way things are done. With your and everyone's help we can continue to focus on providing the best possible care to all and saving many lives.

Dr Jason Clark