



# Mann Cottage Matters

## Dr Hywel Furn Davies

You may be aware that we have additional GP clinics available on certain days — these are called Choice Plus clinics (see page 3 for further details). The importance of Choice Plus is that it enables the Practice to manage ‘on-the-day’ urgent appointments better and also to allow time for us to concentrate on our chronically ill patients and hopefully reduce Hospital admissions. These clinics are used by all North Cotswolds Practices and are based at either Moreton or Bourton (Hospital) and we are pleased to announce a Saturday surgery at Moreton (in the Hospital). They run until 8:00pm during the week and hopefully are more convenient for patients needing to see a Doctor with an acute problem but not wanting to take time off work.

General Practice is under huge pressure; at Mann Cottage alone in the last 2-3 years our patient list size has increased by over 400 patients. Dr Bobrow and myself are working hard to meet this demand and are looking to employ an additional Doctor in the near future. We know you will support us as we make the necessary changes.



## NEW WEBSITE

We are busy updating and improving our website and will be re-launching it soon. We hope patients will like the new layout as it should be much more ‘user’ friendly and will also offer patients the opportunity to have a more interactive experience. Once it is up and running it would be great to get some feedback for any ‘fine tuning’.



## CHILDHOOD IMMUNISATIONS

A reminder from our Nursing team of the importance of ensuring your child is fully up to date with their immunisations. If you have any queries regarding this, please do not hesitate to speak to one of our Practice Nurses, Sasha or Michelle, who will be happy to help you.



## HAY FEVER SEASON IS UPON US AGAIN!

If you are experiencing hay fever symptoms, please ask your local Pharmacist for advice and guidance—they can offer you the best treatment and medication.



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## RESEARCH NEWS



Did you know that Mann Cottage Surgery is a Research Ready Accredited Practice and a member of the Primary Care Research Network? That means we have staff specifically trained to undertake clinical trials within the surgery (Dr Bobrow and myself), and that we conform to all the regulations required to participate in clinical research.

Our surgery takes part in a wide range of NHS research studies with the overall aim to improve patient healthcare outcomes, advance medical science and ensure better clinical practice. At Mann Cottage we have been involved in studies looking at Asthma, Chronic Kidney disease, Chronic Obstructive Airways Disease (COPD), and many more! We are currently recruiting to studies for patients with Urinary Tract Infections, Chronic Kidney Disease, High Blood pressure, and a study called CANDID which looks at helping doctors to develop a diagnosis tool when dealing with possible symptoms of cancer.

You may have been sent a letter inviting you to take part in one of our trials? Perhaps you have seen a

poster on the notice board in the waiting room or one of our GPs has told you about the studies during an appointment? Patients volunteer for clinical trials because they want to help our future generations or because they may benefit from the extra care and potential new treatments they receive whilst on the trial themselves. We like to offer anyone who meets the eligibility criteria an opportunity to participate. You are welcome, in fact, we would encourage you to talk with us about the trial first so that you are fully aware of the commitment and what the expectations of the trial are.

Information about current trials are on our website or please ask to speak to me at reception – I'm not in every day but our wonderful ladies on reception can get a message to me and I will call you back. Perhaps I'll see you soon??

Best wishes

Lara Peniket

Research Nurse

## EVENING TALKS

We recently held an early evening talk for our cancer patients and their families. This was hosted by MacMillan Next Steps and a lot of information and avenues of support were made available. It was a very relaxed, enjoyable and informative evening.

We plan to hold similar events over the coming months and are looking next at inviting along Dementia UK. Letters will be sent to all our patients affected by Dementia/Alzheimer's (not only inviting the patient along but also their family/friends). Full information will be on our website and in the Surgery.

We would welcome suggestions for future events. Please speak to our Reception team.

## A WORD FROM OUR RECEPTION TEAM

As many of you will know, we sadly lost Sue to pastures new last month—we all wish her well on her exciting new career and we shall miss her. This currently leaves us with a vacancy, which we are hoping to fill in the next couple of weeks, but our Reception team are ensuring the continuity of full cover in Reception during this time.

**ARE YOU A CARER?** Do you support and provide help to someone with their care and support needs? Please let us know so we can offer you guidance and support.

**APPOINTMENTS**—just a gentle reminder to give the Surgery a call if you are unable to attend your appointment. This enables us to pass on the time to another patient in need. In May we had 50 missed appointments which equates to over 9 hours of clinic time.

## Choice+ Clinics

Choice+ clinics are funded by the Prime Minister's GP Access Fund to help people who need same day appointments with a GP. There is a Choice+ clinic in every area of Gloucestershire. Your nearest clinics are at Moreton in Marsh and Bourton on the Water, but you can go to whichever clinic is most convenient for you. The clinics are staffed by experienced local GPs. Clinics are open every day of the week, including Saturdays, Sundays and Bank Holidays (not all clinics sites have the full range of appointment availability). Evening appointments are also available. We encourage patients to use this valuable resource as it benefits both you and the Practice as this enables improved access to a GP.

### *How do I access a Choice+ clinic?*

Ring your GP practice as normal. The Receptionist will take some brief details of your medical problem and will offer a Choice+ appointment if this would be suitable for you. You may also be offered a Choice+ appointment if you attend a Minor Injury & Illness Unit at a community hospital.

### *What sort of problems are suitable for Choice+?*

Choice+ is suitable for people with medical problems that are new - such as tonsillitis - or that have got worse, for example someone with COPD (also known as emphysema) who may have a chest infection that needs treating quickly.

### *Are there problems that are not suitable for Choice+?*

Usually, if you have already seen your own GP about a problem, or the appointment is about a long-term medical condition, it would be more appropriate if you continue to see your own GP who already knows about your condition, including tests and treatments that you have received. There are some exceptions – for example, if your long term condition, such as COPD or asthma, has temporarily got worse due to a chest infection, Choice+ will usually be able to help. When you ring your GP surgery, the Receptionist will take advice from the GP who will advise whether Choice+ is suitable for you.

### *Do Choice+ clinics have access to my medical records?*

At the moment, Choice+ doctors are trialling access to full medical records if you give them permission to do so. Please bring a list of the medication you take to your Choice+ appointment.

### *Does my own GP know what has happened at my Choice+ appointment?*

When you come to a Choice+ clinic, you will be asked if you are happy for a record of your appointment to be sent to your own GP. Provided you say yes, a summary of the appointment will be sent to your own doctor.

## Angela's 10k fundraising run—British Heart Foundation

Angela, our Practice Administrator, is undertaking a 10k run through the grounds of beautiful Blenheim Palace on 1st October to raise funds for The British Heart Foundation. This is her first **EVER** 10k and she tells us at the moment she struggles to run for a bus, but she is training hard so she can achieve a decent time!

If you would like to help Angela raise as much money as possible for this vital Charity, there are sponsor forms at Reception and Dispensary and her JustGiving page for online donations is:...

[www.justgiving.com/Angela-Laver1](http://www.justgiving.com/Angela-Laver1)



## Did you know.....

North Cotswolds Hospital has a receptacle for collecting pairs of spectacles that are then sent on to Third World countries. So if you have any redundant pairs lying around at home, please pop them into the Surgery and we can take them across for you.

## FOCUS ON.....

### Your Appointment... please help us to help you

Doctors' appointment slots last 10 minutes and are intended to cover one or two problems, But quite a lot of people will go into the doctor with several problems at once – hence they over run.

The doctors here are very keen to let people have the time that their condition requires, but if people spend 'save up' issues until they've got a list of them, it does not give the doctor time to deal with them all properly and safely. If you know in advance that you will need longer, please discuss the options available with reception when booking.

Similarly, it is only one person per appointment. Please do not "squeeze" other family members into your appointment. Please make separate appointments.

Let us know if you can't keep your appointment. If you no longer require an appointment then do inform the practice in good time so that we can release the time for other patients in need.

After you have booked in, if you are still waiting to be seen after more than 30 minutes, feel free to mention this to Reception, who will look into the reasons for the delay and offer a further appointment if you cannot wait.

### Top Tips

#### Before the Appointment:

- Write down your two or three most important questions.
- Write down the details of your symptoms, including when they started and what makes them better or worse.
- If you are taking any 'over the counter' medicines or supplements that the Doctor has not prescribed, make sure that you take a list of them, so that the Doctor knows what you are taking.

#### During the Appointment:

- Don't be afraid to ask if you don't understand. If you aren't sure about one or more of the words about your condition or treatment, ask for them to be written down. Make yourself a note. This makes it easier to remember afterwards what the Doctor or Nurse told you.

#### Before You Leave the Appointment, Make Sure You:

- Check that you've understood what was said. Ask the Doctor/Nurse to explain again if you aren't sure.
- Check that you've understood what treatment (if any) is being recommended for you and how it will happen. If the Doctor has prescribed some medicine for you, do you understand how you should take it and when it should be started/finished?
- Is there anything that you should stop or start doing that is making your condition worse?
- Is there anything that you can do to help yourself?



### Mann Cottage Surgery

Four Shires Medical Centre  
Stow Road  
Moreton-in-Marsh  
Gloucestershire GL56 0DS

Call the surgery on: **01608  
650764**

Out of Hours: 111

**CQC Registered**

Guide Dog Friendly

### HEALTHY WALKS IN THE COTSWOLDS?

#### Our weekly walks have started in earnest!

**All the teams here at Four Shires Medical Centre place great emphasis on promoting good health to our patients. As part of this, we have introduced regular healthy walks— an initiative designed to encourage local people to participate in a walking group.**

**Every Wednesday at 10:30 we set off from the Surgery for a 30-60 minute walk around the lovely area of Moreton-in-Marsh, returning back to the Surgery for a welcome cup of tea and a biscuit!**

**Do come along... all ages and abilities are very welcome. Summer is here, hopefully bringing with it some good walking weather. Bring your babies in buggies, your family, friends and your dogs!**



***AND FINALLY, this article made our Reception Team smile, we hope it does the same for you.....***

***‘Answering the phone can be like opening Pandora’s Box’***

***Being a GP’s Receptionist means that you’re on the frontline of healthcare – and that you bear the brunt of frightened, angry or rude patients. KIRAN SIDHU (freelance writer and part-time GP Receptionist) explains what the job has taught her about life, death and medicine.***

A nod of the head and, if you’re lucky, a flash of a smile, your GP’s Receptionist sends you down to see the doctor like a gameshow host: “Come on down, Mr Bloggs”. Your prize is a prescription for potions and lotions that will have you fixed. Perched upon her desk, she keeps a healthy distance between herself and you; the proud gatekeeper between two worlds – the healthy and the sick.

It is an assumed truth that just as much as GPs are helpful – their Receptionists are not. In fact, they are dragons spitting fire at you when you’re at your most vulnerable. This really isn’t the way to deal with the sick, after all, you just want to get better but there’s a barrier between you and the doctor – the dreaded GP’s Receptionist.

In a survey conducted last year by Cancer Research UK that asked 2,000 people about their experiences of visiting their GP, 40 per cent of people say that having to talk through their symptoms with doctors’ Receptionists could put them off going to their doctor. The most commonly perceived barriers to seeing a GP were finding it difficult to get an appointment with a particular doctor (42 per cent) or at a convenient time (42 per cent) and disliking having to talk to GP Receptionists about symptoms (40 per cent).

It saddens me to know this as the main purpose of my job is to help find a slot for people to see the doctor. Questions I ask only help me and the doctor establish if we need to see a patient sooner, not to deter. Never has the professionalism and efficiency been so misconstrued.

I’m a freelance writer who works part-time as a GP’s Receptionist. It wasn’t until I took up the post two and a half years ago that I realised how loathed GP Receptionists are. Vileness seems to be considered an inherent trait for the role. But working for a doctors’ surgery has made me realise that a GP’s Receptionist’s existence should be revered rather than loathed.

The phone at a doctor’s surgery rings incessantly; it carries on ringing in my head even when I’m at home. More than once I’ve answered, ‘Good afternoon, how may I help you?’ when my father has rung me at home. It’s the sound of the surgery, it is its very own heartbeat. Who or what lies on the other end of the phone can be anyone’s guess. Answering it is like opening a communication line to Pandora’s box; tales of failed suicide attempts, a toddler who has swallowed a crayon, an overly anxious new mother or someone who has just walked away from a car crash.

It’s more than likely I could have answered any of these calls just before I answered your call to book an appointment. Answering your call swiftly is necessary to the job. It’s not curt or unfriendly – it’s essential. There’s an army of living yet decaying bodies queuing waiting to speak to me, a terminally ill patient who wants an aid to help them sleep at night or a bereaved patient breaking down. They stare at me impatiently, measuring sentences, time waits for no man – especially if you are sick.

Never has other people's bodily functions been handed to me so casually. The Surgery collects blood, pots of saliva, urine samples, tubes of faeces, nail clippings to be tested for fungal diseases, swabs from infected skin and glorious tubes of sputum from coughed-up guts.

I involuntary gag at almost every exchange; the transaction of poo was never going to be easy. The samples sit in a box like coded messages pointing to what's wrong with the human body. I often worry about dropping the sample box, the contents escaping their contained pots in a bid for freedom, so I always handle it as carefully as possible.

Because of this I've learned the importance of being still. There are things that doctors cannot write prescriptions for; often matters of the heart that years of medical school cannot teach. As a GP's Receptionist I hear them and I've learned that loneliness and heartache are things that plague us just as much as cancer and the common cold.

Most people go to work each day without dwelling on the fact that they will inevitably die, but when you work at a doctors' surgery it becomes an inescapable truth. I am forced to face my own mortality. There are new births to register and notifications of death, making me feel like I'm a bookend; the Alpha and Omega of all reception jobs. This can be especially difficult at the odd times when my job narrates my own life, like a death in my own family or if I've been particularly fond of a patient.

There's a great many things to learn from the Petri dish of the waiting room, the most valuable of which I have found are not medical. The waiting room is a hub of ideas and not just for ailments. It's amazing how much people are will to reveal of themselves when they find a lull in their day; the waiting room serves as a pause in people's day. I've heard a few confessions and epiphanies and heard a patients' story of when they escaped death. It's a privilege to listen to people's inner thoughts.

The nation's inexorable frustrations at the NHS are directed at GP's Receptionists like a well-aimed, blunt syringe. We have un-wittingly become the recipients for people's anger for all that's not well with the NHS. This is odd when you think we couldn't be further away from all the decision makers. Over the years, government investment in general practice has reduced roughly from 10 per cent of the NHS budget to about 7 per cent. In spite of this, we now have access to GP services 24 hours, 7 days a week and the demand to see GP's is not faltering. With appointments being in such demand it amazes me that some patients would rather not turn up than call and cancel.

Receptionists seldom get the recognition they deserve – we are just the dragons who answer the phone. It doesn't compare to the doctors who have spent years in medical school, sweating over exams that would help them save the human race. But we are more than just Receptionists; we are the keepers of secrets, compartmentalisers, conduits for medical professionals and the first point of contact for the sick. Unlike the GPs that we serve, ours most likely was not a calling.

We haven't trained in medicine, but often we must face the same drama that a doctor must. It's a tricky job to keep a level of professionalism and order while still being empathetic, but it's one I will continue to do.

Author: Kiran Sidhu