



## **HAVE YOUR SAY RINGMEAD MEDICAL PRACTICE PATIENT PARTICIPATION GROUP NEWSLETTER**

Welcome to the August 2019 edition of the Ringmead Medical Practice Patient Participation Group (PPG) newsletter!

Last year saw a number of changes in our local health authority. Our Practice is part of the NHS East Berkshire Clinical Commissioning Group which includes Bracknell, Ascot, Slough, Windsor and Maidenhead. Also, many of you will know that our Practice now includes Crowthorne (previously Heath Hill Surgery).

The new telephone system installed within the Practice means that telephones now ring across all 3 sites and calls can be picked up by anyone working at these sites.

You may be offered an appointment at Crowthorne, but please be aware that most consulting rooms there are upstairs. Crowthorne has one consulting room on the ground floor for patients who need it, so if you have difficulty climbing or descending stairs or you cannot use stairs at all, you need to tell the receptionist booking your appointment.

Doctors and Nurses working at Crowthorne are more than happy to see patients downstairs.

If there is anything you would like us to research for you for inclusion in the next newsletter, then please let either Beryl Kingsnorth or Viv Gunner know. You can contact us via the Practice Website and we will always make sure that we get back to you to discuss your suggestions.

In this issue we are covering the following topics:

1. Treating Hay Fever
2. Social prescribing - The Power of the Community
3. Your NHS and what it costs
4. COPD (Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease)
5. Lasting Power of Attorney

### **1. Treating Hay Fever**

The last few months have seen a sharp rise in daily pollen counts. This affects patients who suffer from Hay Fever, also known as allergic rhinitis, one of the most common and unpleasant forms of respiratory allergies. Medications previously available from GPs are no longer generally prescribed due to changes in NICE guidelines. You can get advice and cheaper medications direct from your Pharmacist. Symptoms include:

- Itchy eyes and ears
- Uncontrollable sneezing
- A runny nose
- Red and watery eyes which can sometimes be swollen
- Facial itching and sweating
- Headache and earache
- Loss of smell
- Disturbed sleep or tiredness and loss of concentration at work, college, university or school

There are a number of things you can do to lessen the severity of symptoms such as:

- Wearing 'wraparound' sunglasses to keep pollen out of your eyes

- Drying bedlinen indoors during the main pollen season (RHS Wisley can advise when this generally occurs) and keeping windows closed at that time
- Use nasal filters (basically an air filter designed to fit just inside the nostrils to prevent the inhalation of pollen, pollutants and irritants)
- Application of Vaseline around nostrils and use of a cellulose based nasal spray.
- Speak to your pharmacist who can advise on using anti-histamine tablets, anti-allergy eye drops and nasal/steroid sprays to relieve symptoms. If symptoms do not get better or they get worse your pharmacist may advise you to make an appointment to see your GP.

## **2. Social Prescribing - The Power of the Community**

For patients suffering from long term health issues, mental health issues and needing to speak to someone about other worrying issues, Social Prescribing may be able help. You do not need a GP referral to use the service and you can call their friendly team on 01344 35200 between 9 am and 5 pm Monday to Friday.

The following extract from an article by Dr Lisa McNally – Consultant in Public Health at Bracknell Forest Council provides more information for our patients:

‘Social isolation can be extremely detrimental to health; it has been linked to an increase in mortality risk as well as everything from heart disease to depression and cognitive decline. ‘Social Prescribing’ is an example of a programme which is able to reduce isolation and connect people to a community – serving to improve health outcomes and reduce healthcare costs.

Put simply, Social Prescribing is a process by which individuals are referred (often from primary care) to groups, clubs or services in their local community. These may range from walking groups through to sports clubs, craft sessions and advice or support services. Aside from reducing isolation, these referrals can also address other causes of ill-health such as physical inactivity or emotional stress.

While there is still a lack of good quality studies, evidence is emerging that social prescribing programmes can achieve significant improvements in health, mental well-being and reduced costs to the health and social care system.

Social prescribing schemes depend on a wide range of identified, local community groups and services that will offer a warm welcome to anyone referred. In Bracknell Forest, our Public Health team has developed a “Community Map” of local groups that serves as a key resource for social prescribing. Crucially, this map wasn’t developed by simply downloading details from local voluntary service directories. Rather the team got out and explored local areas, discovering those smaller groups that were not on any official ‘list’ but still had great potential to offer support and companionship.

Social prescribing has transformed the way our Public Health team works. What started as a simple mapping project has now snowballed into an ongoing collaboration with our residents on a wide range of initiatives. It has enabled our health and social care colleagues to take a more holistic approach, while for our team, it has really put the ‘public’ back into ‘public health’ work’

For those patients interested in reading Dr McNally’s full article and references, please visit [www.mentalhealthchallenge.org.uk/power-of-community](http://www.mentalhealthchallenge.org.uk/power-of-community). The community map can be found at [www.health.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/online-services/community-map](http://www.health.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/online-services/community-map).

## **3. Your NHS and what it costs**

A timely reminder taken from [www.choosewell.org.uk](http://www.choosewell.org.uk) Did you know the cost of:

Calling an Ambulance	£247
Going to A & E	£124
Going to your GP	£32
Calling NHS 111	£16
Clicking on NHS website	£0.46p

## **4. COPD (Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease)**

COPD is the name used to describe emphysema (which affects the air sacs in your lungs ) and chronic bronchitis (which affects your airways). It usually affects people over the age of 35 who are, or have been heavy smokers or have long-term severe asthma. It can also be caused by long-term exposure to air pollution, fumes and dust from the environment or your place of work.

Unfortunately there is no cure but there are lots of changes that patients can make that help you manage the condition and live an active life.

Symptoms include:

1. Wheezing, particularly when breathing out
2. Breathlessness when resting or active
3. Tight chest
4. Cough and
5. Production of excess mucus and phlegm
6. In severe cases, weight loss, swollen ankles or loss of appetite

Diagnosis is usually confirmed by a breathing test to measure the size of your lungs which also measures the amount of air flowing in and out of them. This is known as a SPIROMETRY TEST. Our Practice has a specialised Nurse who will perform this for you after referral from your GP.

Further information can be obtained from The British Lung Foundation telephone 03000 030 555.

## **5. Lasting Power of Attorney**

Whilst everyone knows it is important to make a will, what happens if you find yourself unable to make decisions about your health or finances because of dementia, accident or illness?

A Lasting Power of Attorney lets you appoint someone to make such decisions on your behalf.

For more information or to start the process, contact:

The Office of the Public Guardian  
P.O Box 16185  
Birmingham  
B2 2WH

Telephone: 0300 456 0300

Email: [customerservices@publicguardian.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:customerservices@publicguardian.gsi.gov.uk)

Textphone: 0115 934 2778

Website: [www.justice.gov.uk/about/opg](http://www.justice.gov.uk/about/opg)