



Patients' Newsletter

“TRIAGE! WHAT’S TRIAGE?”

For many of us the first time we came across this word was at the doctor’s. The dictionary definition is: “the assessment of wounds or illnesses to decide the order of treatment of a large number of patients”.

Some of us have remained a bit mystified about what a “Triage System” means for Ellesmere. Doctor Mark Willis offered to

One of the developments at the Practice over the last few years has been the use of triage. Currently this is carried out by our two very experienced triage nurse specialists, Debbie Rigby and Tracy Coupland and by all the doctors in the Practice at various times.

Sometimes people feel their problem needs assessing within 48 hours of contacting the Practice. The triage system means that the urgency of the problem can be assessed very quickly by a clinician over the telephone.

The most common outcome is that the patient is offered an appointment with the doctor a nurse or telephone advice. Other outcomes can be home visits, routine appointments or referral to casualty or a minor injuries unit.

Busy people nowadays use mobile phones much more than in the past. An advantage of this in health terms is that a patient can have his or her problem assessed without leaving work. If necessary, a convenient appointment can then be organised. From the Practice’s point of view, it can improve the efficiency of appointments. We have the opportunity to organise investigations before a clinician actually *sees* the patient, or arrange other sorts of review such as by our asthma nurses.

A RANGE OF HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS TO MEET YOUR NEEDS

Now that there are so many different professionals working from the Practice, we need to make the process of booking appointments more efficient and build on the successes of the triage system. For example, we now have:

- ▶ five nurses each with different skills
- ▶ a health care assistant
- ▶ a phlebotomist
- ▶ a counsellor
- ▶ district nurses
- ▶ health visitors and assistant
- ▶ a community physio.

HELPING YOU CHOOSE THE RIGHT PROFESSIONAL

It is important that we get a patient to see the right person first time if we possibly can. We are training our reception staff to take more details when dealing with patients on the phone or at the reception desk. In this way they can help you to choose the right professional and the right sort of appointment.

Some people think that the receptionists are just there to make appointments and that they are perhaps just being nosey if they ask for some information. This is so far from the truth!

It is possible to compare them with the counter staff in lots of other businesses where it is completely normal to give more information to an employee to make sure that the correct product or service is ordered. This is, in fact, how we would like to develop the idea of triage. Our reception and telephone call handling staff can take a bit more information to try to help you use our service more efficiently. Hopefully, this will help to reduce waiting times by allowing us to allocate appointments with a range of health professionals. It may even be that a very complex problem could be allocated a longer slot than a minor ailment.

So, when our reception and telephone call handlers ask for a bit of information about your problem, please do not get upset—it is to try to improve the running of the Practice so that everyone benefits.

WE CARE!

Ellesmere is such a caring place - you can mention outside the Post Office that an acquaintance is having a difficult time, and by the time you reach the Co-op someone is asking after them! There must be hundreds of people showing they care by helping with shopping, baby-sitting, befriending, making meals, cleaning, changing library books, giving lifts to hospital....the list is endless. It makes an enormous difference to the quality of people's lives - both of the carers and of those who are cared for.

Sometimes gradually, sometimes suddenly, it may not be possible for someone to manage without help because of illness, frailty or disability. The person giving that help is then officially a Carer.

Are you a Carer?

You may not think so, especially if you are caring for a member of your family. You may be young, old, even a child.

There is support and help for Carers, including specialist support for young carers as explained by Geraldine Dunkerley opposite.

There is an excellent booklet at the Surgery, "We Care" . It contains a wealth of information for carers, with contact numbers, suggestions and down-to-earth helpful advice. The Carers Helpline is 01743 341995. A Carers Group in Ellesmere meets in the Town Hall on the 2nd Tuesday of the month from 10am to noon. Graham Stanford is a regular attender and is full of praise for its helpful activities.



Ed Manning, Practice Manager, explained to us that for several reasons it is important for the Practice to know who is a Carer. It is recorded in a patient's notes, and displayed on the screen whenever a Carer contacts the Surgery. Ellesmere Carers Group is trying to ensure that this information is also available at our local hospitals.

There will be more about being a Carer in future Newsletters. Please tell the Practice if you think you are a Carer. The Reception staff will be happy to help you if you are not sure.

Meg Wilkes

TRYING TO CONNECT YOU!

Ed Manning reveals how it will soon be easier to get through to the Practice by phone

Our patient surveys tell us each year that one of the biggest problems is getting through to us on the telephone.

From the end of January we will be operating a brand spanking new system which will mean much quicker and more efficient connections. At the moment we only have a very limited number of phone lines for you to ring us on which is why quite often you will get the engaged tone. We also have no idea at the moment how many people are trying to phone us at any one time. Our phone system is designed to resolve these problems as we will know how many people are trying to call us. We will then be able to ensure that we have sufficient

phone lines and people to meet the demand.



The downside is that you will have to put up with an automated voice initially answering your calls. It might also take a week or two to get the correct number of lines and people to cope with demand at our busiest times.

Experience tells us that lots of people ring early in the day! If you are phoning for test results, it would be very helpful if you could phone after 2:00pm if possible. This way there will be easier contact for patients with very urgent problems.

Young Carers in Shropshire -

Being a carer can be hard, especially if you are a young carer, still at school or college. Research suggests that young carers find it difficult to concentrate and focus on their school or college work and quite often feel isolated and lonely because they believe they have no one to talk to.

What is a Young Carer?

Young carers are children or young people under the age of 19 who care for a sick or disabled relative, including someone who has mental health or drug and alcohol misuse issues. The British Red Cross run young carer groups across Shropshire, offering all kinds of support and activities. The Young Carers Project provides support and information for young people aged 5-18 years of age.

British Red Cross: Supporting young carers across Shropshire.

Do you help look after someone at home?

Are you under 19 years old?

Are you a young person who looks after someone at home who has...

a long-term illness

a disability

mental health problems?

A young carer may also care for their brother(s) or sister(s), maybe because one or both parents are no longer around.

You may help in different ways:

- shopping
- cleaning
- cooking
- helping a person to get dressed
- giving extra special care
- listening to problems
- keeping someone company



By contacting Shropshire Young Carers project you will be given the chance to

- meet others like yourself
- talk to someone who will listen
- have a break from the carers role
- get practical and emotional support

But, most importantly, have fun and join in with activities such as bowling, trips out, cinema and talking to people who understand.

For further information please contact:



British Red Cross
(Shropshire Young Carers Project)
Sutton Lodge
Betton Street
Shrewsbury
SY3 7NY
Tel: 01743 280070
www.redcross.org.uk
E mail: info@redcross.org.uk

Geraldine Dunkerley

Are you interested in becoming a member of the Ellesmere Patients' Group?

In April 2008 there will be several vacancies for new members to join the Ellesmere Patients' Group (EPG). This is because there is a maximum length of four years (except in exceptional circumstances) which any of our patients are allowed to sit on the group. The EPG has developed a number of ways in which to support the Doctors and their patients since its inception, such as

producing this newsletter and producing a local healthy living website, www.ellesmerepatients.co.uk

If you are interested in working with and advising the Practice, then please either contact Ed Manning, the Practice Manager at the surgery, or Mr David Skipper, EPG Chair, on 01948 710 899.

THE MERE AMBLES WALKING GROUP

John Vernon urges us to get up and get out!

Want to be a bit fitter? Shake off some of the Christmas excess? Or perhaps you are recovering from an illness or operation.

The Mere Amblers meet once a month during the winter months until April, and then it is every week. At present, they meet on the first Wednesday of each month in winter - 2nd January, 6th February, 5th March, and 2nd April - at 11 a.m. for a one-hour walk. Please see the Mere Ambles programme for the meeting point. They always walk at the pace of the slowest person, and mums with pushchairs or buggies are welcome.



They also do their best to make it possible for folk in wheelchairs; in fact, all abilities are very welcome. (Please speak to contacts below). Some Ambles involve a short car journey to get to slightly more remote areas - e.g. Colemere - and transport is provided.

Usually there are between five and ten people in the group together with the two leaders. The full programme is published every few months and is available at the Surgery, Library, Infolink and Meres

Visitors' Centre, as well as on the Patient Group Website www.ellesmerepatients.co.uk/healthy/fitness/walking.htm

Finally, HELP IS ALSO NEEDED

The Mere Amblers need group leaders. All you need is a commitment to go along once a month for one hour, and be the leader or back-marker. There are always two 'leaders' with each group, and training is given (a one-day course), thanks to a community health initiative from the County Council.

CONTACTS:

David Farncombe - 01691-622497 or davidfarncombe@btinternet.com
about walk arrangements

Sister Foong Chee Birch - 01691 622798 or foongchee@hotmail.com
especially about health matters

News from the Surgery

Current Building Update

You may have read in the local papers or seen our builders who have started significant alterations and additions at our site on Trimpley. We have decided that as we might be here to stay for some time, we should try to upgrade the building.

We are in the process of enlarging our waiting room, creating a room to store our records, upgrading our lavatories and building a two storey extension which will have two new consulting rooms

and a call centre for our receptionists. This will give us a bit more room (although sadly less car parking space) and will bring the building up to spec with regards to fire risks and infection control.

We have been assured by the Health Authority that any improvements to our current building will not adversely affect our position in the queue to receive funding for our new Health Centre.

Appointments: 01691 622798

General enquiries: 01691 623256

Emergencies: 01691 622711

www.ellesmeremedicalpractice.co.uk

E-mail: emp@nhs.net

Prescription requests may be sent by e-mail to emp@nhs.net but please do not include other messages in the same e-mail.