

KINGTON MEDICAL PRACTICE PATIENT PARTICIPATION GROUP

UPDATE RE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND CONSEQUENT CHANGES AT THE PRACTICE JUNE 2020

STATISTICS

The peak of the infection rate in Herefordshire occurred during the week of 9th – 16th May, when the number of new cases confirmed by swab testing of patients for the virus) rose by **39.1 per 100,000** of the population of Herefordshire (approximate population 192,000)

In the last week of May this dropped to a rise of **3.4 cases per 100,000**.

1st – 5th June.

Following a lull in Amber Clinic (see below and PPG newsletter 8) referrals on Tuesday and Wednesday, on Friday the most patients in any one day since the Amber hub was set up were seen. The infection rate for the week rose by

6.3 per 100,000. The total number of swab positive cases per 100,000 population of Herefordshire on the 10th of June was **238.9**. The total number of cases diagnosed in Herefordshire by swab is **459** as of the 10th of June.

N.B. The figures above do not reflect the true incidence of the Coronavirus in Herefordshire which is likely to be considerably higher than reported given that:

- Patients may be asymptomatic
- Patients may not have reported/referred themselves as their symptoms were sufficiently mild for them to self manage
- Patients may have been advised to self isolate and were not clinically examined and/or swab tested for the virus.

Strategies are being developed and implemented in Herefordshire to identify outbreaks and intervene early with pro-active screening in high risk environments and contact tracing of positive cases.

Patients will be reassured to learn that the staff and residents of all the care homes in our Practice area have been swab tested for the virus and the Practice is now able to swab test patients in the Amber hub when clinically indicated.

In addition there has not been a case of covid – 19 amongst personnel at the surgery. Staff will be tested for antibodies to covid in the coming weeks.

All in all the situation is encouraging and suggests the measures the Practice has taken are effective in maintaining safety in the surgery.

DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT OF PATIENTS WITH COVID – 19.

Patients will be aware that the surgery has been divided into two separate areas:

- The AMBER side which has strict protocols for infection control and is where patients presenting with symptoms of any infection will be seen. Patients who work or have been in high contact risk environments are also seen here.
- The GREEN side where clinicians conduct telephone/video consultations and patients attend when clinically essential

For further details see PPG newsletter issue 8.

Patients are assessed for referral to the “green” or “amber” clinics on the basis of the following criteria:

Symptoms indicating AMBER appropriate:

- Cough
- Fever >37.8 (or sweats/chills if no thermometer)
- Fatigue
- Anosmia (loss of smell or taste)
- Flu like illness
- Breathless
- Headache (new)
- Diarrhoea or Vomiting
- New confusion or worsening confusion

Risk for Asymptomatic Coronavirus Carriage

- Exposure to unwell person/possible covid in preceding 2 weeks
- Unable to maintain social distance outside of household in previous 2 weeks
- If some one has not been able to maintain social distance s/he is asked if s/he has had contact for more than 15 minutes with another person while less than 2 metres apart

The Amber clinic will assess the condition of patients, carry out any relevant investigations and liaise with the originating GP. The Amber Clinic covers the population of the North and West of the County whereas Green covers our Kington Practice Population.

ORGANISATIONAL CHANGES.

A nascent Primary Care Network comprising the 5 Practices covering the North West Herefordshire locality (Kington, Weobley and Staunton, Mortimer, The Marches and Westfield) has developed further in the light of the pandemic in order to pool our resources to ensure resilience during the pandemic and beyond.

Dr McCaffrey is now the Clinical Director of the network, and the Practice will continue to work closely with its fellow Practices.

The Marches Practice provides the network’s Amber visiting service and liaises closely with referring GPs.

Similarly Westfield Practice has “loaned” Dr Cathcart, who does not see unwell patients, to Kington Practice. At Kington Dr Cathcart has helped with the baby check clinic and the immunisation clinic has been merged with this to minimise trips to the surgery. The Practice hopes that these changes will reassure parents that every precaution has been taken to see their babies safely.

Planning is well underway for the flu season and Practices in the network are again working together to deliver a safe service for this and to make preparations for a “worst case scenario “ of a flu outbreak coinciding with a new outbreak of the coronavirus.

GETTING BACK TO “THE DAY JOB”

Practice GPs and ANPs will continue to respond to urgent referrals, to consult patients by telephone/video, and where it is critical for ongoing management to bring patients in to be seen on the GREEN (low risk) side.

Clinicians are aware that less urgent but nevertheless important condition reviews have fallen behind schedule, and are in the process of collating lists of patients needing these reviews on the basis of severity. They are also working on the most efficient and safest way to carry out these reviews.

The Practice is aware that many patients are worried by the postponement or cancellation of e.g. diagnostic procedures, elective surgery, at the hospital. In collaboration with the Primary Care Network, the Practice is working with the Wye Valley Trust to support both their restoration of services and their wish to further coordinate with Primary Care to modernise approaches so that restoration can proceed more swiftly and safely.

In her email briefing the PPG Dr McCaffrey notes that the current way of working is unprecedented and “therefore there are challenges in being “open” while maintaining a safe environment and effective infection control and prevention procedures. The ability to pop into the surgery will not return until next year, I suspect.”

I was saddened by the last sentence – I particularly appreciate the support the Practice has given to social prescribing initiatives such as the singing for health group, and to enabling the PPG to meet patients informally at the surgery, e.g. at the coffee morning held to celebrate the 70th birthday of the NHS. BUT – on reflection - how lucky we are to have a medical practice that thinks it important enough to mention!

Finally, Dr McCaffrey writes: “We appreciate the frustration our community must feel as a result of these drastic changes that have taken place and are so very grateful for their understanding and patience”

Kay Birchley 10th June 2020

If you have any questions/comments about this update do please contact me

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