

Important message from the Practice Manager of Charing Surgery

It has been an incredibly pressured few weeks but we now feel we've put in all the measures we can to ensure we're in a good position to continue to provide care to our patient's whilst protecting them and our staff as much as we can. I have set out below the arrangements we have put in place. May I start though with some requests:

- **We do not have enough Personal Protection Equipment as supplies are not flowing from NHS England. If anyone has masks, gowns, gloves, scrubs to spare we would be very grateful. If you do have any please send and email to charingsurgery@nhs.net and we can liaise with you to arrange drop off or collection.**
- **Please do not come to collect your prescription early. Many people have been coming for repeat prescriptions only one or two weeks after having collected the previous one. This means staff interrupt their work to deal with the request and this prevents them getting on top of their work. This in turn is causing long queues. There is no shortage of medication so no need to stockpile**
- **Having a patient's mobile number is extremely helpful as we can quickly send out updates/changes/new information or guidance and mobiles are used for a GP to set up a video calls. If you are over 18 and we do not already have your mobile please email it to charingsurgery@nhs.net**

Surgery

Our opening hours are unchanged – 8am to 6.30pm. The surgery is operating as normal in that if a patients needs to consult with a GP, they can call as they normally would and arrange a call back from a GP that day. GPs are now doing lots of video calls with patients so that they do not need to come into the surgery. However, if a GP feels that they need to see a patients they will arrange that. Protective measures are in place to protect both the GP and patient and the patients may be brought into our isolation room if the GP feels that is appropriate.

We have been instructed by NHS England that all routine appointments with Nurses should be cancelled but we are still ensuring patients that need urgent diagnostics (ultrasound, blood test, echocardiogram) can be seen at the surgery. Nursing are still running warfarin, complex dressings, baby and pre school immunisation clinics and again those appointments might be in the isolation room if appropriate. Nursing have also been seeing patients in the garden and in their cars if appropriate – everything is focussed on minimising potential transmission of the virus. To that end we are only opening the doors to the surgery at certain times so that anyone coming in for a pre booked appointment can be screened first. We have an 8am to 9am session for vulnerable/at risk patients. Then 10am to 12pm and 3pm to 5pm for other booked appointments.

To maximise access for patients we have introduced 'e-consultations' in the last week – patients can complete a consultation on line, at any time via our website, and that will be reviewed by a GP by the end of the next working day. Pictures (eg of rashes) can be attached to the e-consult so a really effective way of communicating with a GP for non-urgent queries. We have also introduced video consultations which are proving to be really effective.

In terms of ensuring we keep the surgery running, our GPs now have laptops so that they can work from home with access to patient's records and documentation and all our internal systems. We have been trying it out over the past couple of weeks with GPs telephone triaging from home so that

if they have to self isolate (as one in this week) they can still work. A number of our admin staff have also got remote access and able to work remotely too.

We are working closely with our Primary Care Network (Tenterden, Hamstreet and Woodchurch) to ensure provision of services across our network.

Pharmacy

The pharmacy is being overwhelmed by patients coming to collect repeat prescriptions early. I would say that at any time 75% of the people in the queue have already collected a repeat prescription 1-2 weeks beforehand but are coming back again. **There are no significant shortages of medication so there is no need for anyone to stockpile.** By patients coming back early, it means the team have no chance to get on top of dispensing to the normal dispensing schedule and that in itself leads to delays as we're having to make up scripts ad hoc and often than not that can lead to omissions as the order won't have been placed for a script as it's being collected so early. We completely understand why people are worried about running out of medication but they don't need to be.

We are also working with volunteers to have medication delivered to vulnerable/high risk patients. We have about 5 deliveries a day going out at the moment and looking to increase that over the next week.

We have reduced the pharmacy's opening hours to allow time to prepare deliveries and keep on top of dispensing. The pharmacy opening hours are 9am to 12pm and 2pm to 5pm, plus 9am to 1pm on Saturdays. To help the massive increase in demand we are bringing in extra staff – including a level/uni students to help manage the queues and get the scripts processed as quickly as possible

Easter weekend

Both the surgery and the pharmacy will be open on Good Friday and Easter Monday. The surgery will operate normal working hours and the pharmacy will be open for medication collection from 2pm to 5pm on both days, although the team will be working all day on both days to dispense and prepare deliveries.

For the latest updates, please see our website ww.charingpractice.co.uk

Thank you to all our patients who have sent kind messages and made offers of support.

Kay Acott
Practice Manager
8th April 2020