

Update 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 continue to provide care to our patients whilst protecting them and our staff as much as possible. I have set out below the arrangements we have put in place which are in line with the current government guidelines. May I start though with some updates:

- **Thank you for the support in providing PPE to the practice; the scrubs, gowns and visors we've received are fantastic.**
- **Please do not come to collect your prescription (or other patient's medication) early. Many have been coming for repeats only one or two weeks after having collected the previous one. Staff then interrupt their work to deal with the request and this prevents them getting on top of their work and adds to the queues. There is no need to stockpile medication.**
- **Having a patient's mobile number is extremely helpful as we can quickly send out updates/changes/new information; 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 number, please email it to charingsurgery@nhs.net**
- **Patients who have received a letter from the Government advising them to shield who require support from volunteers can self refer to GoodSam by calling 0808 196 3646. Support is also available from the local volunteer service for Kent - Kent Together helpline at www.kent.gov.uk/KentTogether or by calling on 03000 41 92 92. It is a 24 hour service.**
- **A new specific Covid 19 support website has been set up by the network of rural surgeries (Charing, Tenterden, Hamstreet and Woodchurch) with useful information and links to access support and help.**
<http://www.connectingashfordrural.co.uk/>

Surgery

The surgery is operating normal opening hours of 8am to 6.30pm and if a patient needs to consult with a GP, they can call as usual 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.

We have introduced 'e-consultations'. Patients can complete a consultation online, at any time via our website, and that will be reviewed by a GP by the end of the next working day. Pictures (e.g. of rashes) can be attached to the e-consult so is a good way of communicating with a GP for non-urgent queries.

However, if a GP feels that they need to see a patient, 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.

As per NHS England instructions, all routine appointments with Nurses are cancelled but we are still ensuring patients that need urgent diagnostics (ultrasound, blood test, echocardiogram) can be seen at the surgery. Nursing is still running warfarin, complex dressings, baby and pre school immunisation clinics; again those appointments might be in

the isolation room. 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.

Please do still contact the surgery if you have any health concerns and please ensure all childhood immunisations are kept up to date.

Pharmacy

We appreciate that the queues in the pharmacy can be quite long. We are currently struggling with staff shortages due to staff illness and some staff being forced to self-isolate. We are redeploying staff from other areas to support the pharmacy where we can and we have staff continuing to work when they should be shielding due to health conditions.

The pharmacy is being overwhelmed by patients coming to collect repeat prescriptions early. There are no significant shortages of medication so there is no need for anyone to stockpile and we ask that patients only come to collect their prescription when it is due. We are also dealing with an unprecedented demand for deliveries and so ask that patients only request a delivery if they are genuinely unable to collect themselves or get family or friends to collect. Please only contact us to request a delivery from a volunteer if you have no other means of having your medication collected.

We have reduced pharmacy opening hours to allow time to prepare deliveries and keep on top of dispensing. Opening hours are now 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 queues and get scripts processed as quickly as possible.

For the latest updates, please see our website www.charingpractice.co.uk Thank you to all our patients who have sent kind messages and made offers of support.

Kay Acott, Practice Manager
21st April 2020