



Dunbeath Practice Newsletter

October 2006

New Staff

Marion Pink, as many of you will be aware, is moving back south, and is no longer working in Dunbeath – we wish her all the best for the future in her new home! As a result, we have advertised and recruited. Thanks to all those that applied – we hope we now have the best people for the job!

Fiona Donn will be stepping into the receptionist/dispenser role, and has now completed her training since she started at the end of August. Please, however, still bear with us, as there is a very steep learning curve for dispensing! Fiona lives locally in Dunbeath with her partner Sandy and their 3 year old son Michael. In her spare time Fiona enjoys playing badminton in the local hall – some of you may have met here there.

In addition, we have taken on an extra pair of hands to help with the administration and provide holiday relief in the form of Paula Dempsey.

She also lives in Dunbeath with her family, and has started this month. She has a particular role in organizing call/recall, so many of you may get a phone call from her in the near future! She is currently phoning those of you who are entitled to a flu vaccine.

Finally, the practice nurse role has gone to Nova James from near Wick, who will be working from 11am – 4pm on a Thursday for well person screening and chronic disease management. She is also currently a staff nurse in Rosebank in Wick, so you may also see her there. Those of you invited to attend by Paula, may well be offered appointments with Nova.

Some of you may also notice that Andrew is spending more time in the practice. This is because he has now been made a partner in order to help streamline the practice and improve our quality under the new contract – no easy task!

Questionnaires

A belated thank you to those of you who filled in and returned a questionnaire earlier this year. Overall we are pleased to report that satisfaction levels with the practice were high, particularly with the reception staff and doctor availability. One point that did come up was that many people were unaware that they could telephone the doctor for advice. As a result of this, we have now designated specific times when this service is available; this will be discussed further below.

There were also a number of people looking for evening or weekend surgeries. Unfortunately, due to staff constraints, this is not possible. There is a surgery on a Monday and Thursday that runs until 5.30pm – if you are unable to make the 5.30pm appointment, but can arrive before 6pm, then on a Thursday if you let the staff know we can accommodate you.

In addition, the Well Woman Clinic has now also been moved to 4.30-5.30pm on a Wednesday.

In addition, there were some people who were unaware they could always receive an urgent appointment the same day. There are always some slots left free for emergencies, but when the normal surgery is full, you may be asked the reason for your appointment in order that these extra slots are only used when absolutely necessary.

Also on the subject of questionnaires, because of the new GP contract this will be an annual event! This year we will be sending out postal surveys to a random selection of adults with SAEs. If you receive one, please complete and return it, as without your feedback we don't know whether we are doing things well or not.

New Telephone Surgery

From Monday 3rd July, there will be specific telephone surgeries when you can phone to speak to the doctor. These will be daily except Tuesday from 11-11.30am and 3.30-4pm. During these times, you can phone to discuss any issues with the doctor, or speak to them if you are unsure whether you need a face to face appointment or not.

If you have had investigations done, and the result is abnormal, the doctor may also contact you during these times. If you telephone with a query outside these times, you will be asked for a contact number and given a time when you will be called back. This should prevent any missed return calls, as well as enabling a better advice service.

Further Training

Dr Usher is going to videotape some surgeries over the next few weeks. This is for her to further her education, with the aim of achieving the higher qualification of MRCGP. All such videos made are subject to strict confidentiality, and will only be viewed by trained doctors as part of the assessment process.

If you make an appointment for one of these sessions, you will be told beforehand that you will be videoed. If you do not wish to be videoed, please let us know.

This will not affect your care in any way. However, if you are willing, thank you for your assistance.

Dr Usher is also studying for the diploma in dermatology through Cardiff University this year. If you have any skin complaints, you may be asked if it is OK to be photographed as part of this course. It is up to you whether you agree, and written consent will be asked for.

Out Of Hours/NHS24

This is just a reminder that Dr Usher no longer covers out of hours, that is the time period outside Monday – Friday 8am – 6pm. During the remaining period, NHS Highland has responsibility for managing your care for emergencies that are unable to wait until Dr Usher is on duty.

If you need a doctor out-of-hours, you can still phone the surgery number. Your call will, however, be put directly through to NHS24, who handle all calls for NHS Highland. Alternatively, you can phone NHS24 direct on 08454 24 24 24.

They will ask you for some basic information, then pass your call to a nurse adviser. They may also request access to your Emergency Care Summary, which gives them personal details, your current medication, and any allergies you may have. If you do not want this information to be stored centrally, please notify the surgery to be taken off the system.

If at this initial stage, it is clear you need an emergency ambulance, then this will be arranged for you. Alternatively, you can telephone 999 direct.

The nurse adviser will discuss your symptoms with you, and may offer advice, ask you to attend the out of hours centre in Wick, or if necessary, arrange for a doctor to visit. These doctors are all trained GPs, but may work purely in the out of hours period. If you do not have transport, this may be arranged for you.

Please note also that roughly once a month, all practices in Highland close for Protected Learning. Again, your call will go to NHS24.

If you have any complaints about this service, then please address them either to NHS Highland or to NHS24. You may still mention them to the practice, but we can take no further action unless you authorise us to take it up with these services on your behalf.

Midwifery Cover

All out of hours calls for antenatal problems or possible labour will be triaged via the Henderson Wing (telephone 01955 880330) at Caithness General. This is to save time for you if you should need admission. In an emergency, therefore, contact the hospital direct, and ask to be put through to the Henderson Wing.

Angela Echavarren is now the main midwife for this area, although she is based in Wick. The antenatal clinic runs from 3.30 – 4.30pm on a Wednesday afternoon. When Angela is on holiday, you may see one of the other midwives from Wick, but your care will be continuous.

There are now two permanent consultants appointed in Wick, so the hospital maternity service is going to continue.

House Visits

Can we remind you that calls for house visits should be made before 10.30am except in a dire emergency.

If calls are made after this time and are not deemed urgent, they may be left until the following day at the doctor's discretion.

Repeat prescriptions

Repeat prescriptions should be collected and ordered after 11am if possible. Please also allow at least 24 hours notice prior to collection.

All patients on regular medication will be called for review at least annually. Please attend these appointments when offered.

Homoeopathy Treatment

As many of you may be aware, Andrew Usher previously offered private treatment to local patients, but has not had the time to do this recently. However, he now intends to restart sessions. Dr Natasha Usher also has basic homoeopathic training which she is planning to further this year through the Glasgow Homoeopathic Hospital.

If you are interested in homoeopathic treatment, nutritional advice, or hypnotherapy, then please contact Andrew Usher or Dr Usher (homoeopathy only) via the surgery in the first instance for more information.

Remember, outside surgery hours your call to the surgery (731205) will be diverted to NHS24.