

Launceston Medical Centre Patient Participation Group (PPG)

Minutes from Microsoft Teams Meeting Tuesday, 27th July 2021 at 6pm

Present: Joan Heaton (Chair), Les Whaley (Vice-Chair), Janet Ford (Secretary & Treasurer), Paul Ford, Dawn Rogers, Andrew Yardley, (LMC Practice Manager), Cym Downing, Stephen Howard, Liz L'Estrange West, Leighton Penhale, Bonnie Soanes, Claire Symons, Helen Price, Jenny Woolley (Tamar Valley Medical Centre)

Apologies: Jo Keogh, Helen Bailey

Joan opened the meeting welcoming the PPG members and guests and reminded everyone of the confidentiality of the minutes until approved.

Andy had been asked to explain the role of the Patient Advisors and how this was different to a receptionist. He asked for feedback from PPG members and patients. He introduced Leeann Charnock, Reception Team Leader who explained the role of the Patient Advisor and the fact that discussions had taken place regarding the new title which is used in other Practices. Leeann kindly provided the following:

LAUNCESTON MEDICAL CENTRE – The role of the Patient Advisor

Historically the GP Receptionist has always had bad press and 'dragon' status for being the brick wall between the patient and the doctor. The role has evolved over the years and those working in a GP Reception are no longer 'just a Receptionist' and have an essential position within the Practice. Without them patients would not have access to our services and the clinical team would be left unsupported. All staff complete an induction which includes training in confidentiality, information governance, safeguarding and basic life support alongside in-house training with senior staff.

The title changed 3 years ago to Patient Advisor in an attempt to alter the perception that the staff either sit at the front desk or just answer the phones. They are not clinically trained and we do not expect them to give clinical advice. They are however expected to direct the patient promptly and appropriately and offer administrative support to our clinical team. They work closely with our Dispensary, Medical Secretarial, Administration and IT Departments to ensure the patient needs are met in a timely manner.

What else does a Patient Advisor do? (This is an overview and not a definitive list):

- Signpost patients to the correct clinician and book telephone appointments within the appropriate timeframe – the questions they ask on behalf of the doctors will facilitate this and avoid wasted clinical time and delay in treatment
- Book appointments with the nursing team
- Greet patients and help ensure a smooth journey whilst they are within the Practice
- Answer patient enquiries that come in by phone, letter, email, E-Consult or in person
- Give support and show empathy to patients who are anxious or upset away from the Reception area
- Ensure visit requests are processed while prioritising urgency and highlighting these to the clinical team

- Arrange ambulances, 999 or urgent, giving clear concise information
- Receive important information and ensure this is passed on appropriately
- Process all samples that need to go via the courier by 10.30am each morning ensuring urgent tests are marked accordingly and followed up that day
- Contact patients who miss urgent blood test appointments or who are due a review or overdue a follow up test
- Contact patients and arrange follow up appointments
- Ensure families are contacted if childhood immunisations are overdue
- Facilitate patient access to our vaccination programmes (Flu/Covid)
- Give advice to patients on other services available to them that are not necessarily medically based
- Ensure the GPs, Paramedics, Nurse Practitioners, Nurses, Psychologist and Social Prescriber are supported continually throughout the day
- Give support to visiting clinicians, Screening clinics, Physiotherapists, Diabetic Specialist Nurses
- Liaise with District Nurses, Midwives, Health Visitors, Mental Health Teams, Social Workers, Consultants and a wide range of other Healthcare professionals not based at the Practice
- Assess the appointment system to ensure all patients have been seen or contacted
- Send cremation forms to funeral directors and Death Certificates to the Cornwall registrar, when completed by the GP
- Liaise with Coroner's office with any information needed

She went on to explain that the PAs are there to ensure the patient is signposted to the proper clinician (i.e. a doctor, nurse practitioner etc.) and for this reason, the PA needs to ask the patient the reason for their request for an appointment. The appointment list then goes to the appropriate clinician who can then prioritise their day accordingly. The patient does have the right to refuse to advise the PA of their problem.

The title of Patient Advisor was discussed as some felt it should be changed because the Patient Advisor was not medically trained. However, Leeann advised this title had been discussed at length as they are advising a route not clinically advising the patient. Dawn suggested the PA could answer the phone in a softer manner i.e. please may I have the reason for your request today. Leeann said she could work on that with her team.

Andy advised that perhaps there could be a bypass system via another number for those who are not IT literate or have dementia – he will keep the PPG updated.

Bonnie asked how the PA deals with a person phoning in on behalf of a patient and Leeann said it was a question of confidentiality and would need permission. Each case is different and in most cases, the Practice holds Powers of Attorney.

Andy said it would be interesting to hear what the PPG Umbrella Group thinks of the Patient Advisor title.

Joan thanked Leeann for her input.

Joan (Chair) briefly ran through her report.

Les (Vice-Chair) raised his questions to Andy as shown in the Agenda.

Andy responded regarding the signage and will see if the sign showing one way and exit could be made larger. As the car park is due to be tarmacked soon, an arrow indicating the exit could not be done yet.

Les is to provide Andy with a leaflet regarding Tesco as no-one had seen this.

Paul suggested a "holding back" of some appointments to ensure patients were able to get one when they rang in. Andy said it would be difficult to implement.

Bonnie raised the question of earwax removal and Andy advised LMC is not commissioned to offer this and some GPs were against it as there are risks. However, if it became essential then a GP would help a patient.

Les asked for his thanks to be passed on to Doctors Hall and Jones plus Robbie the physiotherapist.

Andy updated the members regarding the COVID situation. Phase 3 (booster doses) will start in early September but the LMC does not have full details yet. The plan is to administer the flu vaccine in one arm and the Covid booster in the other arm. We do not know which vaccine will be offered but will keep the PPG updated.

Helen advised she had been part of a research programme regarding the 2 vaccines.

Liz asked if there was any trial on using different Covid vaccines to those previously administered and Andy responded that they didn't know yet.

Liz also asked about the proposed 3% pay rise for NHS staff and the LMC's staff reaction. Andy was pleased to say the Practice staff were happy to have some pay rise especially as a lot of people were out of work or had been made redundant.

Joan asked about the podiatry service and Andy was still not sure where patients will be seen after LMC staff sent them for referral. Bonnie said that Launceston Hospital does podiatry.

Jenny (Tamar Valley Medical Centre) introduced herself and mentioned the situation with regard to Patient Advisors dealing with appointments. At their Practice the telephone message is a GP explaining the patient would be asked by the PA what the problem is so they are forewarned.

Dawn asked if the PAs identified themselves by name as a good point of reference and Jenny said they did.

Andy thanked Jenny for her comments.

Cym asked if the dementia clock had been supplied yet and Andy advised it is on order. Joan also mentioned that Councillor John Conway has offered £200 for

another dementia clock from his Cornwall Council Community Chest Fund.

Paul asked Andy if he could kindly update the LMC's website to add all the Minutes from previous meetings as the last on the site was August 2020. Andy agreed to do this tomorrow.

It was agreed that the next LMC PPG meeting would be held on **Tuesday, 24th August, 2021 at 6pm via Microsoft Teams.**

It was also suggested to hold the **Annual General Meeting on Tuesday, 28th September 2021** – most likely by Microsoft Teams – to be advised.

The meeting ended at 7.50 pm.