

BALMORE PARK SURGERY NEWSLETTER



No.1

February 2009

Welcome to the first Balmore Park Newsletter. We hope to produce this every three months to keep you, our patients and your families up to date with the many changes in General Practice and, in particular, here at Balmore Park.

First, a little about us. **We are the second largest Practice in Reading**, serving over 15,000 people. We have 7 partners, one salaried GP, one Assistant GP and a Registrar GP who will be completing his or her GP training with us, having worked first for several years in hospital. We have a dedicated team of 7 Practice Nurses who man the Treatment Room and provide nurse run clinics in Asthma, Diabetes, Minor Illness, Blood Pressure, Smoking Cessation, Immunisations and Family Planning. We also work with a team of District Nurses and Health Visitors who help us to provide care for the elderly, the housebound and the under 5's. The day-to-day running of the Practice is overseen by our Practice Manager, supported by administrative staff, receptionists and secretaries. We are fortunate also to have two physiotherapists, a counsellor and phlebotomist (blood taker!) working on site. A large board with photos of all the staff, with their names, is hung in the Practice lobby.

The GPs operate a personal list system. This means whenever possible you will be seen by your own GP; we believe this helps provide better continuity of care. If your GP is on holiday, all letters or results will be passed to another named GP to be dealt with.

We are a busy surgery! In an average week we provide around 1460 appointments, 650 with GPs, 300 in the Treatment Room, 300

in Nurse-run Clinics, 150 for blood-taking and 60 with the physiotherapists. We rarely have unused appointments so do please try to let us know in good time if you are unable to make it! Due to demand, we may not always be able to give you an appointment the same day but if you have a problem that is genuinely urgent for that day we will always ensure that you are seen.

RECENT CHANGES

Extended Hours

We have recently started offering appointments outside normal surgery hours. At present these are on a Wednesday and Thursday evening between 6.30pm and 8.00pm, alternate Friday mornings between 7.00am and 8.00am and one Saturday morning every eight weeks between 8.30am and 10.30am. These appointments are pre-booked only and no emergency appointments will be available during these times. All emergency calls during extended hours will be dealt with by the Out of Hours Service, Westcall. Extended Hours appointments are primarily designed to be used by patients who are unable to attend the surgery in usual working hours.

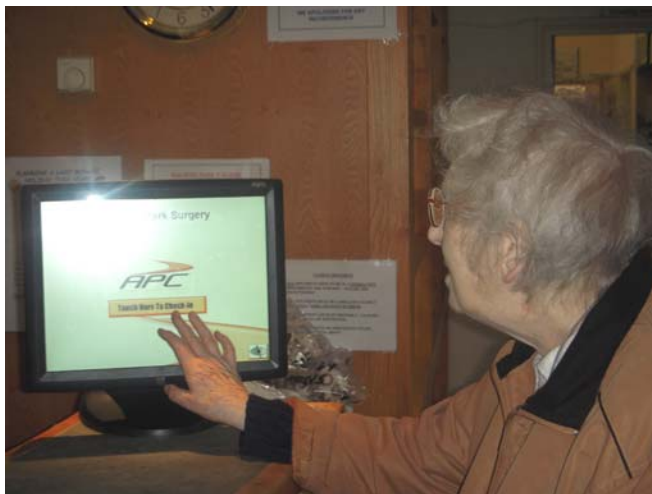
New Telephone System

We have recently had a new telephone system installed which allows calls to be more easily directed to the appropriate person. There were a few technical difficulties during the changeover of the systems. We hope this did not cause too much inconvenience.

Internet Booking and Repeat Prescription Requests

It is now possible for you to book your appointments and order repeat prescriptions on-line. Please fill in the form to register for this service at reception if interested.

Touch Screen Check-in System



The touch screen has been a great success in reducing the queues in reception. To book in, you are asked to enter your sex and date of birth which confirms your appointment.

Patient Participation Group (PPG)

Many surgeries now have Patient Participation Groups and a PPG was formed at Balmore Park in 2008. The group meets approximately four times a year to discuss services at the surgery, provide feedback from patients and contribute to discussions about service development. You may have met some members of the group who helped out at our Saturday morning flu clinics in October, and handed out Patient Survey Questionnaires during the month of November. The PPG is a good point of contact for patient feedback and suggestions. Comments and ideas can be passed to the group via the Practice Manager; please ask for a form at reception if you have any general / non-medical issues you may wish the PPG to raise with the Practice. For reasons of confidentiality, the group will not be able to deal with patient complaints on matters of a personal medical nature. There is an existing Complaints Procedure in place for this, and in the first instance you should contact Eileen Flood, the Practice Manager.

Stop Smoking

The Practice runs weekly smoking cessation clinics on a Wednesday afternoon. Please ask at reception for a referral form.

Alternatively, please call 0118 9525400 or email stopsmokingservice@berkshire.nhs.uk to book an appointment.

Wart Clinic

Unfortunately we are no longer providing the clinic for freezing of warts and verrucas. Studies have shown that the treatment is no more effective than over-the-counter products if the latter are used correctly and for long enough. An information sheet regarding the correct treatment is available at reception. Cryotherapy will still be available for treatment of pre-cancerous skin conditions.

Dermatology clinics

Since October last Dr Anna Ziprin, Dermatology Assistant has been joined by Dr Martin James, Consultant Dermatologist in the Dermatology Clinics. Clinics are held weekly in the Practice on Tuesday mornings. Patients will need to be referred to the dermatology clinic by their GP.

MMR Catch-up

As you may have read recently in the press, the incidence of measles in the UK is again increasing and there have been confirmed cases in Reading in the last month. Children are normally immunised against measles with the MMR (mumps, measles rubella) vaccine at 13 months and again before they start at school. The Department of Health has instituted a programme to try to immunise those children who have missed their vaccinations. To this end, we are reviewing the records of all children under the age of 16 and will be contacting any who has missed either one or both MMR vaccinations. We would encourage you to take up this opportunity. There is a very large body of evidence supporting the safety of the MMR vaccine, and there is a risk of serious ill health and rarely of death with measles infection. If you are aware that your child has not been fully immunised and you would like to arrange immunisation for them, please telephone us here at the surgery. Alternatively, if you wish to discuss this further, please contact your Health Visitor or GP.

New HPV vaccine – helping to beat Cervical Cancer

You may have heard about a vaccine to help protect against cervical cancer recently on the radio or read about it in newspapers or magazines.

The vaccination is being offered to all young women from 12 -18 years of age. Whilst the vaccination programme is mainly being done in schools the surgery will be involved in vaccinating certain target groups. The vaccine is a course of 3 injections given over 6 months. There has been rigorous safety testing on the vaccination and studies have shown HPV vaccine to be safe and well-tolerated.

This is the first time a vaccination programme against cervical cancer has been provided in this country and we now have the opportunity of helping to prevent the spread of a very serious disease that affects over 3000 women every year in the UK and causes over 1000 deaths. The vaccination protects against the commonest cause of cervical cancer. If you want any further advice about this vaccination programme, please speak to either Sally Reeve or Louise Mander.

Dr Sarah Morton

Dr Morton is our GP Registrar. She trained in Leeds and worked in the Yorkshire area before moving to Reading in 2007. She was brought up in Surrey where her family still live and enjoys seeing more of them now she has moved south. Her hobbies centre on the outdoors, sport and friends. She has been busy lately preparing for her wedding, which took place in January!

New Faces in Reception

In November three new receptionists, Caroline, Paula and Nik joined our reception team



Reading Half-Marathon

Drs Helen Paige, Graham Paige and Jacky Payne are planning to run the Reading Half-Marathon in March 2009 in aid of Macmillan. If you would like to sponsor them please see the receptionist at the front desk. Alternatively, if you are thinking of running, and would like to form part of a team, please let us know and we would be delighted if you would join us!

Tai Chi Classes

An initiative by Berkshire Age Concern, Berkshire West PCT and Reading Borough Council promoting Active Retirement Groups has come to Caversham. Since July 2008, Tai chi classes have been started and are proving to be very successful with over 60 people regularly attending the weekly event. This exercise can help improve strength, balance, posture and calm and can suit even the less mobile. If you are interested in joining the classes please contact Age Concern on 0118 959 4242.



Calling all Accomplished Photographers

Many of you may have noticed that we have pictures of Reading on our corridor walls. Unfortunately these are becoming faded and we are planning replacements. If any of you have local pictures you would like to see on display please contact our Practice Manager. (Also if you have anything you feel might be included in later additions of the newsletter please contact us.)

Website

Have you visited the Practice's Website at www.balmoreparksurgery.co.uk? There's a great deal of extra information there – the Practice Area Map, a full list of the Primary Care Services that the Practice provides as well as advice on self treatment in the home and much more.



Pulmonary Rehabilitation

For people with chronic lung conditions such as Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD), the fear of breathlessness often results in a deterioration of health. People avoid exercise which leads to muscle de-conditioning, poor utilization of oxygen and increased effort needed to perform daily tasks. This can all lead further to inactivity, loss of confidence, social isolation, dependence and disability.

Pulmonary Rehabilitation provides a combination of exercise and education that addresses the physical and psychological limitations experienced by a breathless person and stops the downwards spiral. Benefits include reduced breathlessness, improved quality of life, improved self-management of the condition and reduced numbers of hospital admissions.

Reading has recently begun to offer pulmonary rehabilitation in the community with courses being held in the Academy Sports Centre, Northumberland Avenue. It is a joint venture involving a Physiotherapist, Sport for Leisure activity trainer, Respiratory Nurse and Community Matron. The first group completed their course in November 2008 and were all amazed and delighted at the progress they made. They will now continue with weekly maintenance sessions.

If you feel you would benefit from Pulmonary Rehabilitation, please speak to your GP.



A Plea

As all of us are aware the Practice's car-parking area is over-stretched. It would be very helpful if, where practicable, patients found other ways to attend or made use of other parking and walked from their cars. This would help make sure that those of us who really need to get as close as possible don't have the added hassle of trying to find a spot. Thank you!