



Our Newsletter

Issue 14

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On other Pages

Tools to change your life.	2
Access to appointments	2
The travel and holiday health seminar	3
Cognitive Behavioural Therapy: a patient's experience	3
A national meeting on patient safety	4
Online services: a reminder	4
NEWSBOARD	5
Dates of 2007 Meetings	5

Patients' views on relocation of Bolingbroke Hospital services

BPSPLG's Open Meeting on 14th March examined options for the short-term relocation of Bolingbroke Hospital services until the future of health provision in Battersea/North Wandsworth is determined. There were presentations by Dr Chris Streater of St George's and Dr David Finch of Wandsworth PCT. Twenty-six patients and staff attended. Afterwards, five options were put to the vote.

1. Transfer majority of services to St John's Therapy Centre (SJTC): **8 votes**
2. Transfer some services to SJTC and some to Queen Mary's Hospital, Roehampton: **0 votes**
3. Transfer most services to St George's Hospital (SGH): **8 votes**
4. Transfer some services to SJTC and some to SGH: **0 votes**
5. Do not relocate any services until a site for new community health facilities in Battersea has been identified. **6 votes**

None of the proposals: **4 votes**

The results showed a preference for either option 1 or option 3 and a complete rejection of options 2 and 4. In its response to the PCT and St George's, BPSPLG also drew attention to other issues about how the consultation was organised. A copy of our response is on the BPS website www.balhamparksurgery.co.uk.



Extended Hours Is another battle looming?



In 2004-05, with the support of the Local Authority's Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee, BPSPLG won the battle to keep funding for the extended hours services available at BPS before 8 am and after 6.30 pm on some days and on Saturday mornings. The PCT Board agreed in July 2005 that the current scheme would continue "until such time as a widely accepted equitable alternative can be provided" and pending the outcome of the Health Outside Hospitals Review. When it appeared in January 2006, the health White Paper *Our Health, Our Care, Our Say* strongly supported initiatives such as extended hours to meet patients' changing needs. With some justification, we felt vindicated. Since then funding for our extended hours has flowed regularly.


It is concerning, therefore, to see that the PCT recently agreed a new policy (called a Local Enhanced Service or LES) to encourage local Practices to offer extended access to GP services. The irony is that making access better for more Practices could endanger what we have already. BPSPLG wrote to Ann Radmore, the PCT's chief executive, welcoming the change of heart about extended hours generally, but asking for the PCT's assurance that any extended hours LES would not have the perverse effect of reducing the provision already operating at Balham Park Surgery. We also requested additional funding for our Surgery to extend its access even further. The justification for this comes directly from the views of our patients – they want more access opportunities over and above what is already available at the Practice.

Are these latest developments a case of "once more unto the breach" to defend extended hours access at BPS?

Watch this space!

Tools to change your life

Free 10-week group sessions are now being run by a psychology team at the Balham Park Surgery. Places are available on “Overcoming Fear” and “Managing Moods”. To book a place speak to one of the doctors or nurse practitioners. Feedback from people attending previous groups is extremely positive.

 <p><i>Overcoming Fear</i></p> <p>Is Fear getting in the way of your living the life that you want to live?</p> <p>Do you experience panic attacks?</p> <p>Does unnecessary worry take over?</p> <p>Do you often feel anxious and lacking in confidence in social situations?</p> <p>A 10-session course run by a clinical psychologist, designed to help you understand and overcome anxiety, will be starting soon on Mondays 4.30 to 6.30 pm.</p> <p>Interested? Please pick up a leaflet from Reception and discuss this with your GP or Nurse Practitioner.</p>	<div style="border: 2px solid green; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"> <h3>Managing Moods</h3> </div> <p>Are you troubled by a low mood you can't shake off? Do you find you don't get as much pleasure out of life as you used to? Do you find it difficult to relax? You may be suffering from mild depression or anxiety. Ask your GP about joining the Managing Moods group.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"> tired up? fretful? depressed? nervous? worried? anxious? </p> <div style="border: 1px solid green; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"> <p>The Managing Moods group, run by a psychology team in Balham Park Surgery, will be starting soon.</p> <p>The group will meet every Wednesday from 5.00 to 6.30 pm for 10 weeks.</p> </div>
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Access to Appointments: requests made at a Practice Team Meeting

Five BPSPLG members participated in the full primary healthcare team meeting at the Practice on Friday 16th March. It discussed a wide agenda about responding to patients' access needs as patients saw them and as the Practice saw them – not always the same thing. The meeting divided into groups and did some role plays about how to respond to phone calls from anxious patients who said they needed to be seen urgently. This was a real challenge, but all the groups thought that offering a telephone consultation with a GP was the best alternative if a face-to-face appointment wasn't available because the patient was miles away at work, or had very young children at home who couldn't be left, or didn't have transport to the Surgery. Points made by patients included :

- Encourage patients to tell Reception if they have several reasons for wanting an appointment. Reception will make a note of this in the clinical record and advise the patient that the doctor would try to deal with everything, but that a further appointment might be necessary. The note will make the doctor aware that there is more than one issue. “Double appointments” are not a good idea as they restrict the number of patients who can be seen in a day.
- Reception should have a list of London Walk-in Centres that might be closer alternatives for people working away from Wandsworth who want to be seen quickly. This would be particularly useful if there was no immediate slot available at the Surgery and they wanted more than a telephone consultation.
- Have specific times for ring-back telephone consultations. This would have to be protected time for doctors, not on top of other commitments.
- Patients arriving more than 15 minutes late for an appointment might be asked to re-book or wait until the doctor can squeeze them in. At worst the patient might have to wait until the end of surgery.

More than just jobs: the travel and holiday health seminar

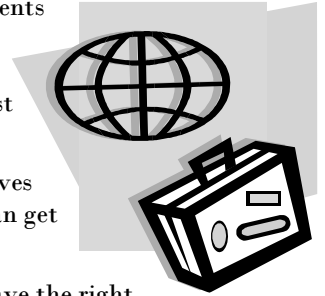
Nurse Practitioner Sou Man talked about travel and holiday health to a group of about 25 patients at the most recent educational seminar run by BPSPLG. Four nurses at the Practice offer travel health advice Monday to Saturday, so there are plenty of opportunities to find out what's involved and get injections and medication before travelling. No need to panic at the last minute — but they can handle that too!

Advice pre- and post-travel is free, as are vaccines except for yellow fever. The Practice also gives malaria prophylaxis advice and prescriptions. Someone who has been vaccinated previously can get telephone advice to confirm things are OK, and thus do without an appointment.

Sou stressed the importance of seeking advice before travelling, but also said it was better to have the right jab on the morning of travel rather than risk not having it at all.

Travel health isn't just about jabs. It can also be about overcoming fear of flying and dealing with any in-flight problems or airline restrictions because of health issues. The Practice can help with all of these, as well as advising about care in the sun, motion and altitude sickness, and accident avoidance.

The list of what the Practice can provide in terms of vaccinations and prevention is too long to list here, and a short article can't do justice to the wealth of fascinating information Sou provided. So if you want to find out more to help you and your family keep healthy when travelling, just give Sou or one of her nursing colleagues a call at the Surgery and book a travel health appointment. If you are travelling in Europe, make sure you have a European Health Insurance Card (EHIC), which replaces the old E111 form, as well as travel insurance. Apply online at www.ehic.org.uk.



Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) A patient's experience

One of our patients offered the following contribution to the BPSPLG Newsletter. She has undergone a major lifestyle transformation with a little help from the Practice and a lot of effort on her part. She wanted to share her positive experience more widely.

I have suffered from depression for 27 years. During that time I have had various medications and counselling on five different occasions, all to little effect.

Since last September I have been seeing the psychologist at Balham Park Surgery and we have been looking at issues and ways of thinking that have affected me for nearly 60 years.

The psychologist uses a technique called Cognitive Behavioural Therapy where I'm learning to challenge my negative thought processes instead of just accepting them. It has worked really well for me.

The change is amazing. For the first time since I became depressed I have hope and confidence that my depression is lifting because I can see that my situation can change and is changing. I can't tell you what this means to me and also to my family. I am more secure in my friendships and when I meet people, whereas before I only really felt secure in my home with my family. I've now started doing more things outside our home and often on my own. Not only that, but I'm enjoying it!

It's hard to start challenging thoughts that have been in your mind for so many years, but my thinking led me into depression. CBT is giving me the opportunity to break free from the negative thinking which has brought me so low and also affected my family.

I would thoroughly recommend CBT to anyone facing similar problems. I found it hard working to start something new, but I had nothing to lose and I've gained so much. As I continue to learn I have hope that I will gain more and more.

If you would like to find out more about psychology services at the Practice, including CBT, speak to one of the GPs or a Nurse Practitioner at the Surgery.

If you have any success stories like this one that you would like to share in this Newsletter, please write to Natalie Goldsmid-Whyte, Managing Partner at the Practice.

BPSPLG Members join a national meeting on Patient Safety

On 8th March BPSPLG members Gwen Richard, Barbara Madeloff and Jeanette Lalla-Maharajh joined patients from all over England at a national meeting on patient safety organised by the National Association of Patient Participation. They divided into groups and worked with facilitators to discuss safety from the patient's point of view.



Gwen, Barbara and Jeanette said they were surprised during the feedback at the end of the session at how similar each group's views were, but there was also a very wide variation in patients' experiences in different parts of England. Talking about GP Practices took up the bulk of the discussion time. Reception and telephone contact were frequently cited problems. Balham Park Surgery came out extremely well in the discussions. As Barbara said, BPS didn't have those problems because we had "the best Reception staff around" and phones were answered by a real person!

Barbara said one issue that was relevant to BPS was the electronic signage in the waiting room, because as a blind person she couldn't see it, but clinicians overcame this problem by coming out and greeting blind patients. One safety issue that could apply to BPS was the possibility of drug or appointment mix-ups if a patient couldn't see well or read English.

Jeanette summarised the requests which had come up in the workshops: "transport, parking, automatic wide doors, uncluttered waiting rooms, safe designs, colour shelving/storage/notice boards, flash screen, panic buttons, good lighting, firm floor coverings, ground floor access."

Patients also said they wanted "human contact, empathy, an easy appointments system, being met and greeted by doctor/nurse, pamphlets and booklets about health topics, understanding of culture and attitude, privacy if requested, play area for children, knowledge of patients' needs, different heights of chairs, availability of other services, clean and accessible toilets, and colourful surroundings".

Balham Park Surgery has most of this already, but there is always room for improvement and to learn from national events like this. All three BPSPLG members enjoyed the experience of talking with other patients, are enthusiastic about keeping the work going and look forward to future meetings.

Signed up for online services yet?

In September 2004 the Surgery started promoting its online services to help patients manage their appointments, request repeat prescriptions and submit non-urgent messages 24 hours a day.

Now there are over 1500 regular users. To register, just go to Reception and get a demonstration of how to use these services. You'll get faster communication by email than is sometimes possible by phone, and you can see which doctors are available for some weeks ahead, so you can make appointments when it's convenient for you, and cancel them if necessary.



Note, though, that you can't book online for medicals, cervical smears, baby checks or procedures requiring extended appointments.

Signed up but lost your password? Just call the Surgery on 020 8772 3326 or 3325 to get a new one.

NEWSBOARD

This newsletter will be on tape and available for any patient who is visually impaired. Please let Reception know. Also, if there are any patients who would like to read the newsletter but need a translation, please let Reception know and we shall try and arrange it.

Annual Meeting
Don't miss a chance to hear local MP Sadiq Khan talk about healthcare in Wandsworth at the 7th Annual Open Meeting on 13th June, starting at 7pm. Everyone is welcome.

Want to quit smoking?

Come to our next education seminar on Wednesday 10th October at 7pm and find out how the Practice can help you give up for good. "Giving up Smoking" will be presented by Karen Henderson, Senior Healthcare Assistant at the Practice and a trained smoking cessation counsellor.

Surgery catchment area expands

With additional clinical staff in post Balham Park Surgery is able to extend its catchment area and from May 2007 can register patients from many more roads locally. For details of the expanded Practice area, see the website www.balhamparksurgery.co.uk or ask at Reception for a copy of our Practice booklet.

Dates of 2007 Meetings: 7-9 pm, Education Room, Balham Park Surgery

Unless otherwise stated, these are all BPSPLG committee meetings, held on Wednesdays.

All patients of the Surgery are welcome to attend any meeting.

13 June **Annual Open Meeting**

11 July

13 September

10 October

14 November

12 December

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www.balhamparksurgery.co.uk