

AUCKLAND MEDICAL GROUP

What's Happening?



WELCOME TO SPRING and lighter nights with a chance to get outdoors more!

As always there have many comings and goings amongst the team but we currently have, we hope you will agree, a great team of clinical staff working hard to provide the best care possible.



You will have noticed that there have been a lot of changes in the way things work at the practice recently, especially with our appointments system. We appreciate that it takes time to get used to us doing things a different way by getting a doctor to phone you before you are given an appointment but we hope you will understand that it is improving our efficiency and allowing us to help more people in the most appropriate way.

The aim of doing **phone triage** is to make sure that if you need to see someone each of you goes to see the appropriate clinician when you are given an appointment. We also know that you know and understand your bodies well and can often tell us what you need or just want to talk and get some advice. By calling you we can minimize the disruption to your lives while allowing us to have contact with twice as many patients, solving more problems every day. We are confident that this system and with it, our service, will continue to improve with experience.



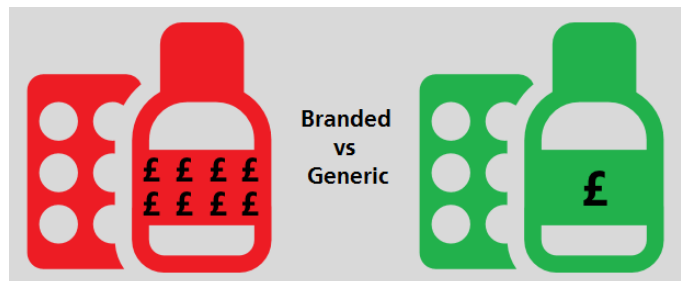
We always appreciate positive and constructive feedback but of course if you do have any comments at all that you would like to make about how the system is working or our service overall please ask at the desk for a feedback form or pass it on to a member of staff.

And now to the bigger picture... The NHS in crisis!

This is a familiar title amongst the media and you will all know that the NHS, like most public services, is really struggling with **budget cuts** alongside the increasing demands of an aging population and more expensive medication. With our local budgets being tightly squeezed we are having to make some wide ranging changes and while we know some of them will be unpopular with our patients we hope that you can understand that we must save wherever we can. GP surgeries are under ever increasing pressure at the moment to the point where some in the region have come to the point of collapse.

While we are stable now we appreciate your support in these ever more challenging times as the future of our services are under direct threat if we continue to overspend on our prescribing budget. One of our drives at the moment includes removing drugs from prescription that people can buy over the counter cheaply. These include Paracetamol (you will have probably seen the signs around the surgery) but also antihistamine tablets used for hayfever and some mild allergies.

We have also been advised we must change some prescribing practices all together. Inevitably this means stopping or changing medications that some of you, our patients, take and feel are beneficial. Sometimes this is cost related but can also be related to manufacturing availability or new evidence becoming available to show that a medicine does not work or needs to change. We do consider patient care our first priority but some of these decisions are being taken out of our hands and while we will continue to review patients within their individual circumstances I would take this opportunity to appeal to you all to **help us save the NHS money** so that we can save you or your family when we need to prescribe more expensive or critical medicines.



With that in mind I will introduce you to Kathryn Featherstone, our very experienced Pharmacist and her box of hints on how you can help...



Helpful
Tips

Katy's box of building blocks to save the NHS

Hello - some of you may have already received letters from my colleague Salim or from me about changes to your medicines. We are working with the doctors at the practice to review prescribing and where there are safe, effective and more cost-effective choices of medicines we are switching patients to these new options. For example, a recent change in the brand of one particular inhaler saves the NHS over £32,000 each year from our practice. We have also been reviewing medicines where the evidence shows there isn't any benefit, where the NHS is wasting money by prescribing these drugs - such as Glucosamine and we have stopped prescribing these.

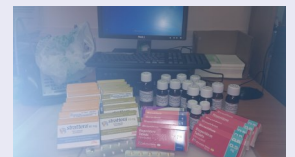
So what can you do to help the NHS save money?

We are asking patients to *buy their own medicines* where these are available eg

- **Paracetamol*—for aches and pains
- **Antihistamines*—for hayfever
- **Laxatives*—for simple constipation.


This has a double benefit for the NHS: appointments for minor ailments can be diverted to pharmacies, which frees up the doctors and nurses to deal with more serious long term illnesses such as diabetes, asthma etc and it also helps to reduce the spend on medicines for these minor ailments, where patients can look after themselves.

Also - please *only order the medicines you actually need* - you don't need to have a cupboard full of extra boxes of tablets, creams and inhalers as this wastes NHS money. One patient returned all of the medicines shown in the picture - 9 month's worth of medicines that cost £2,720. So please check everything is needed when you order your medicines.



I'm sure I will be contacting some more of you over the coming months as we struggle to reduce the amount we spend without reducing the quality of care that you get from us. Please feel free to get in touch with me at the surgery if you have any questions or concerns about the changes we are making.

Other BIG regional news



Our local **Urgent Care Centre** (UCC) is going to be **closing during the day from 31/03/17**. This means that while a day time Minor Injuries Unit based in Bishop Hospital will continue in the day and UCC services will continue as previously from 8pm. You will need to **contact us directly or via 111 for all other medical concerns between 8am–6pm**.

We know that the UCC has long been considered a ‘walk in’ service by our local population but it was always intended to be by appointment only via 111. This is now too expensive to provide in the region as overlap care and unfortunately it was often used inappropriately for convenience and second opinions.

With this in mind we are reviewing all use of the local UCC during the daytime. We will be trying to offer some additional emergency appointments to allow for patients who might have otherwise attended the UCC and would remind all parents, especially of children under 5 years, that we will always try to offer urgent appointments as needed where you have immediate concerns.

So the year ahead in 2017 is set for many more challenges with tight budgets and increasing pressure to provide more appointments at any time of the night or day. The central government continues to heap pressure on the primary care system, giving us targets that are ever harder to reach while criticizing the valiant efforts made by general practice around the country to continue providing world class comprehensive health care freely to everyone. They refuse to listen to the mounting voice from clinicians in all areas advising them that, no matter how much good intention and how strong the principle for good care is amongst us there is only so much that can be done in a day and with minimal expense. We can only hope that they will put their ear to the ground and recognise the situation before the collapse of the NHS becomes inevitable.

Whatever the situation now and over the years, however, we would like to reassure you that **our surgery will continue to offer you the best individualised care possible** as we have in difficult times in the past.

We hope that you will support us in this coming year and consider the overall picture sometimes when things don’t appear to be going exactly the way they used to, or you would prefer.