

AVISFORD MEDICAL GROUP PRACTICE NEWSLETTER

Yew Tree Surgery



Middleton Medical Centre



Sponsored by Friends of Avisford PPG

Charity No: 1074882

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FRIENDS OF AVISFORD MEDICAL GROUP
CHARITY NUMBER: 1074882
SUPPORTING YOUR SURGERY

Welcome to the second edition of our new style newsletter. Who would have believed that it would be 18 months before we could publish the next edition? In the intervening months we have all had to contend with the challenges of the Coronavirus with the surgery staff being very much on the frontline.

A big vote of thanks must go to all staff in trying to maintain a service to patients and being part of the once in a generation roll out of the national vaccination programme. Whilst we are gradually benefitting from the easing of restrictions on our everyday life there are still challenges to face as the virus is still with us.

The newsletter is funded by the Friends using the money raised through our fundraising efforts. During the past 18 month these activities have been restricted purely to funds raised via the 50:50 Club (see the information on page 9). The sale of secondhand books and birthday cards is currently suspended but we hope as things open up that this will be able to function again in the near future.

We have not been able to hold free health talks over the past 18 months due to restrictions on group gatherings. This also meant we were unable to hold an AGM in June 2020 but we are hoping to hold one in the autumn, subject to government restrictions - watch out for posters once we have more information.

We hope you find this edition informative with details of staff changes. We also say goodbye to Jerry Nelson as he retires as Business Manager after 17 years, and leaves not just the surgery but the area, for the next stage of his life in Devon. We thank Jerry for all his hard work and wish him a happy and healthy retirement.

As we say goodbye to Jerry, we welcome Paul Lovell who has taken up the post of Practice Manager. You can learn more about Paul on page 10 of this newsletter.

As you may remember from Issue 1 the Friends group has a management committee which oversees the charity and over the past 18 months we have lost 2 members of the committee, Patricia Robinson and Pat Mares both of whom

have moved out of the area and we thank them for their service. Sadly, Juliet Morgan our Patron and Committee member has also decided to stand down after many years of service. Juliet's husband was a founder member of The Friends in the summer of 1998. We all thank Juliet for her hard work and support and she remains a patient at the surgery so we hope to see her at our future events. We welcome Mrs Mavis Burton as our new Patron. Mavis served as Chair and a Committee member many years, and I am sure will keep us on the right road.

The recent departures leave vacancies on the committee and if you are interested in joining us and would like to know more, please do not hesitate to contact Gill Henry (Chair) via our email account avisford.friends@gmail.com or pop a note into the surgery. Currently we have been holding meetings of the committee via Microsoft TEAMS but hope to meet again face to face as soon as restrictions ease.

GIFT AID

From time to time, patients like to make donations – used to purchase much-needed items for the Practice. If you would like to donate, cheques should be made payable to: The Friends of Avisford Medical Group.

Gift Aid it! If you are a UK tax-payer, the Friends can claim back the tax you pay from HMRC, if you are eligible and you would like us to claim Gift Aid on your donation.

If you would like to make a donation and are able to Gift Aid it, please either ring the Treasurer on 01243 555685, email or leave a note at either surgery and she will provide the correct form for you to complete.

By completing the form, you are agreeing to the above information being held on paper and/or electronically by the Friends' committee. It will not be shared with any other organisation, company or person unless required by law.

LATEST PRACTICE NEWS

Not many people could have foreseen the devastating effect that Covid-19 would have on the population of our planet. There have been pandemics in the past but - partly because of the ease of worldwide travel compared with past pandemics - the spread was unprecedented. Nobody in the NHS had ever experienced anything like it before. Some initial measures to combat Covid may have seemed obvious but there was a huge element of uncertainty and some would say, panic.

In those early days, advice about what GP Practices should do changed on a daily (sometimes hourly) basis. One thing was clear, however, the absolute need to keep Covid out of General Practice. If someone brought Covid into the Practice, it would close us down – and there would be nowhere for our patients to be consulted or treated for other, non-Covid illnesses. **This was the reason behind the sudden locking of doors and change of routine – to keep yourselves and our staff safe so that we could continue to help patients.**

All GP Practices were advised to close their doors and to take every possible precaution. We were advised to see patients only where absolutely necessary – and even then, only if they wore a face covering and if we could be sure that they had no Covid symptoms. We installed intercom systems at both surgeries as we felt that this was the best option for limiting access and reducing the risk to our staff. We fitted our intercoms on internal doors to provide some respite for our patients from wind and rain but we were under strict instructions not to put out any more than minimal seating unless we were able to wipe down in between each seated patient. Without the time or resources to do this, we had to have a limit of just one or two chairs.

Avisford Medical Group is a member of the Regis Primary Care Network (PCN) which includes practices in central Bognor as well as Arundel, the Croft, Flansham Park and us. Our own Dr Bansil was instrumental in setting-up two 'Hot Hub' centres within Regis – dedicated remote surgeries where patients with possible Covid symptoms could be seen by a GP for non-Covid conditions. Our local Hot

Hub has been at Meadowcroft Surgery in Bilsham Road, Yapton. By providing this service, Regis PCN was ensuring that all patients could continue to consult a GP whilst keeping our established GP Surgeries open.

The NHS insisted that we operate a 'triage only' system which meant all patients wanting an appointment with a GP had to first talk to the GP by telephone. The GP had to decide if it was imperative that the patient come to the surgery. Many patients were asked to send in photos to assist the GP in deciding how to treat or if he/she needed to physically examine them.

We decided to continue to take blood from patients whose regime demanded this – but made sure that we didn't have two patients in the surgery at the same time. Just allowing this extra time between appointments (to wipe down chairs, surfaces, etc.) meant our available number of appointments reduced significantly. Our capacity was also compromised due to several staff members taking sick leave or working from home. Working from home was a totally new concept for us – as were on-line consultations, which all Practices were encouraged to use. Some patients may recall eConsult, accessed via our web-site. We ceased this for many reasons, including that it was having a detrimental effect on our 'normal' service

Certain procedures (normally done by a nurse) had to stop altogether from the very first lockdown period and, at the time of writing, it is still not been deemed safe enough to restart these. Procedures such as spirometry (for COPD patients) and ear syringing are processes that carry a huge risk to those carrying it out.

We know from feedback we received at the time, that some patients were upset by not having the usual level of contact with the surgery through normal avenues such as face-to-face appointments. Like yourselves, we have also never been through such a stressful time and no-one in the Practice wants to continue to restrict our actions any longer than absolutely necessary. We want patients back in the surgery, we don't want to wear PPE, our GPs want to see patients face-to-face – and we want to provide the same service we always provided – as well as helping patients to minimise the effects of delays with hospital treatment, etc. and hope this will start to happen soon.....

COVID VACCINATIONS

When the first Covid vaccine was approved, Regis PCN was instructed to identify and prepare a site where large-scale vaccinations could be given. The Pfizer-Biontec vaccine was approved first and the conditions for administering & storing stopped this being done in GP Practices. Dr Bansil and other senior members of Regis PCN identified the top floor of the Bognor Health Centre as being an excellent location for many reasons. However, the area was not fit for use so in the build-up to Christmas 2020, a huge amount of work was put into making this area clean and ready for use. It became operational on 7th January 2021.

Thanks to the PCN team, volunteer GPs and nurses from all the local Practices (as well as Arun Council agreeing to the use of their central Bognor car park) this new Local Vaccination Site (LVS) was an instant success and a huge number of vaccinations were given. As per government instructions, we started with health workers and those aged over 80. The older age groups took a long time to work through as we have a very high proportion of elderly people in our catchment area. As a consequence, we were still working through our over 80s when other (predominantly younger) regions had been able to move on to the next age cohort

The Astra Zeneca/Oxford vaccine became available later in January and was easier to store and administer but the decision was taken to continue to administer via the Bognor site. The Astra Zeneca vaccine was able to be administered at a slightly faster rate, thus speeding up progress through the older age groups.

Invitations for Covid vaccinations did not come directly from Practices. This was handled by a local Healthcare organisation known as Innovations in Primary Care (IPC) and was an enormous task. Lots of problems were encountered – not least the number of people who felt that they should be invited despite Government / NHS guidance saying they weren't eligible at that time. Naturally, people were concerned about their own safety and that of their families and loved ones.

Within Regis, our aim was to 'play it by the book' – and that is just what we did. As well local vaccination site (LVS) and mass sites (MVS) starting up – the most local being Chichester, Portsmouth and Brighton. Eligible patients were able to book at mass vaccination sites on-line.

1st doses progressed at a steady rate until those vaccinated in January were due for their second dose. The PCN had little option but to suspend 1st doses whilst giving 2nd doses. Currently, second doses are still being given to those aged over 50 and those in younger age groups deemed vulnerable. Arrangements for the under 50's are currently under negotiation but it is probable that Practice nursing staff will continue to provide these vaccinations and they will be delivered on the top floor of the Bognor Health Centre building (as well as MVS sites). Inviting patients will be done by IPC, based on lists supplied by each Regis Practice. This will allow our GPs, Nurses & Reception staff to get back to some sort of normality

LETTER FROM JERRY

It is with very mixed emotions that I say farewell to the Practice, its staff and all of its patients. I joined the Practice in February 2004 and it seemed like a very strange world compared with the commercial world from which I'd come. I didn't know anything about the NHS or healthcare – but I'm very grateful to Dr Foulkes and his fellow GP Partners who must have seen enough in my cv to take a chance on me. I'd like to think that I have justified their faith in me. After 17 years – during which time I have seen so much change – it is time for me to throw in the towel. My plan is to retire to Devon and I leave the Practice at the end of May having handed over the reins to my successor, Paul Lovell.

I'd like to thank all my work colleagues for helping to make my time at Avisford Medical Group enjoyable and rewarding and I'd also like to thank our patients, many of whom I've come to know very well. I would like to extend special thanks to members of the Friends committee. They are a hard-working and dedicated group of people who provide a very effective link between the Practice and its patients. I would urge patients to contact the Friends with any criticisms or suggestions about how to improve the Practice, and how to make the patient experience better. They make sure comments are fed to Practice management. It's a shame that Covid marred my last year. My generation and subsequent have never seen the like. The devastation caused is horrendous. Thank goodness our lockdowns, restrictions and vaccinations seem to have, at last, got the better of it. Let's hope that Covid is soon gone forever. Au revoir everyone! I leave you in very capable hands.....

STAFF NEWS

GPs

Dr Margaret Mansi has switched from working on a locum basis to being a regular, salaried GP.

Dr Sam Shepperd has decided to leave us at the end of July. We wish her well in her new tele-medicine role.

Dr Jamie Wood is a locum GP who actually lives and works in Australia but was back in the UK when Covid struck – so he couldn't go back. Australia's loss has been our gain as Jamie has covered a lot of sessions for us. Sadly, we know we'll probably lose him again soon

Nurses

Tricia Breach has been a Nurse Practitioner in the Practice for nearly 13 years and took over as Lead Nurse a few years ago. Tricia has decided to retire which she does with our thanks and best wishes.

Sam Seare joined us in January from the Community Nursing team. Sam has a wealth of experience and has knuckled down to the task of trying to catch up with annual reviews for our diabetic patients. Sam has also been tireless in administering Covid jabs to care and nursing home residents and staff.

Jules Healy retires at the end of August. We all wish her a long & happy retirement

Lottie Bullard joined us as Health Care Assistant (HCA) in February following the departure of Caroline McPeak. Lottie has lots of experience and is keen to learn more

Clinical Pharmacist

Many of you will remember **Shoebi Zaman** from her days at Lloyds Pharmacy in Middleton and then Yapton Pharmacy. Shoebi now works for us as a Clinical Pharmacist and has had a huge beneficial impact on our prescribing quality.

We also have another part-time clinical pharmacist, **Nadya Boyanova**, who divides her time between Avisford and Bersted Green Surgery.

STAFF NEWS

Reception

Becky Nelson, Reception Manager at Middleton Surgery for the past 17 years has left the Practice pending her house move to Devon.

Jackie Hanson has managed Yapton Reception for 17 years and has now taken on the role of managing both reception teams. Jackie intends to integrate team members where possible and to achieve a more consistent approach across both surgeries

Wendy Pratt has left Middleton Reception for a more senior role in an NHS GP Practice. Wendy joined us 4 years ago from Arun Medical Group in Littlehampton

Emma Ford from Yapton Reception is taking temporary leave and hopes to return in early 2022.

Heather Scanlan has joined our Reception team. Heather is an experienced GP Practice receptionist.

Practice Management

Jerry Nelson has retired and is re-locating to Devon. **Paul Lovell** is the new Practice Manager. Paul joined us in May having previously been Manager at Arundel. He aims to maintain and enhancing our reputation as being a great Practice both to work for, and for patients. (see separate 'interview' with Paul)

AVISFORD FRIENDS FUNDRAISING 50:50 CLUB

Would you like to support the vital fundraising of the Friends by joining the 50:50 club? If so, there is a subscription of £5 a month per ticket (you can have more than one!) Payment can be made by Standing Order (preferred) or cheque with a minimum of 3 months. Each month half the money goes to the Friends' funds to buy essential equipment and improve facilities for patients. The other 50% goes to one lucky winner - currently £110 (increases with each new member). Download the forms from our website, email us avisford.friends@gmail.com or ring our Treasurer on 01243 555685 with your address details.

STAFF FOCUS – PAUL LOVELL, PRACTICE MANAGER**HOW DO YOU SEE YOUR ROLE?**

First and foremost, as a patient of the NHS I have expectations and expect nothing less for the Avisford patients. I see my role as managing the surgery in a way that is safe and effective for both patients and staff. I want to work closely with patients to understand what they want from us & hopefully then make it happen.

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN IN YOUR JOB?

I joined Avisford on the 4th May 2021, but have been in the NHS as Practice Manager of The Arundel Surgery since November 2019. Prior to this I have spent time working and managing for Royal Mail and prior to that Lloyds Bank Group.

HAVE YOU ALWAYS BEEN ‘A LOCAL’?

I grew up in Lancing and now live in Worthing with my wife (who for her sins is a teacher) and my three children. I enjoy mountain biking and through this have got to know the area better whilst getting some much-needed exercise and fresh air

IF YOU HADN'T BECOME A MANAGER, WHAT MIGHT YOU HAVE BECOME

As a child my dream was to be an architect, (as well as chef, footballer, golfer and other things). I think as a child, I suffered from “many dreams, lack of direction!” As an adult I was interested in becoming a Police Officer. I applied 3 times but didn't meet any of their specific recruitment drives at the time

WHAT DO YOU FIND THE MOST ENJOYABLE PART OF THE JOB?

Helping people. That's why I came into the NHS, I want to help people

AND THE MOST CHALLENGING

Red tape! There seem to be so many hoops to jump through before you can achieve what we want to for our patients.

WHAT DO YOU ENJOY DOING TO RELAX?

I really enjoy mountain biking but my current level of fitness suggests I need to do more. Spending time with my family is important to me, but only they could say if they feel the same about spending time with me. Hopefully they do!

COMING INTO THE JOB AT PROBABLY THE MOST DIFFICULT TIME IMAGINABLE, HOW DO YOU THINK YOU CAN IMPROVE PRACTICE IMAGE WITH THE PATIENTS

To be honest, even without Covid, the role of Practice Manager is one of the most challenging jobs I have known, but I really enjoy it. I think the key to any good relationship is strong communication and this is something that I intend to work on and keep as a focus. It is always nice to receive positive feedback, but on occasion the things that don't go so well give us the greatest chance to improve. Feedback doesn't have to be in the form of a complaint or frustration, it can be a simple observation. I view working closely with our patients and keeping channels of communication open as vitally important, so we can provide you (our patients) with the care that you would like to receive. Everyone's opinion matters to me

AT THE END OF YOUR FIRST YEAR, WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE CONSIDERED YOUR BEST ACHIEVEMENT

I would like to think that my best achievement would be to help create a really good team spirit and nice working environment - which is what I have found here, - to enable the team to continue to work to the very best of their ability.

WELCOME TO THE NEW UNIVERSITY HOSPITALS SUSSEX TRUST - UHSussex

This is the new NHS Foundation Trust formed by the joining of Western Sussex Hospitals (St Richards (SRH), Worthing & Southlands) and Brighton & Sussex University Hospitals (Royal Sussex County, Royal Alexandra & Princess Royal). When in 2017 BSUH went into special measures the two Trusts were led by the WSH Executive Board. During that time BSUH moved to a Good Care Quality Commission rating. This new Trust is one of the largest acute Trusts in England. Patients & visitors will notice only small changes. The plan is that all hospitals will retain their unique identity and continue to provide the same services. The biggest benefits are that patients will have better access to specialist and tertiary (high level) care. Some concerns have been voiced over the size of the new Trust and whether SRH will lose out in the merger. The Council of Governors - which includes both politically appointed and directly elected local representatives - is aware of these concerns and will keep a close watch to ensure that the range and quality of services at all the hospitals is maintained and improved. To that end major development projects at SRH include a significant extension of the Emergency Floor.

AVISFORD MEDICAL GROUP: <https://www.avisford.co.uk/>

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FRIENDS OF AVISFORD PPG: **web: <https://avisfordfriends.co.uk/>**
Email: avisford.friends@gmail.com

PLEA FROM THE EDITOR –

please talk to us! We are here to help and whilst we don't have a magic wand, unless we know of an issue we cannot help, so please tell us what we may be able to do to help; what you would like to know and what you would like to see in the newsletter. When things return to 'normal' - and book & card sales resume - we will try to have a representative at one or other surgery for an hour or so once a month so you can chat 'face to face'. Watch the notice boards for times. Or just drop a note into the book box or email us

Newsletters are available in each surgery & on the Friends' web-site (www.avisfordfriends.co.uk). If you would prefer to receive a copy by post, please complete the details below and leave at the surgery or in the book box.

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