

Stonehaven Medical Group



Surgery Snippets - Feb 24

By Dr Kris McLaughlin

We have had a number of staffing changes within the last several months. You can find out more about all of our staff on the practice website:

www.stonehavenmedicalgroup.scot.nhs.uk

Key changes

Dr Claire Johnston sadly had to leave the practice in January 2024. She had worked here for 14 years and will be hugely missed by all the staff and patients that she cared for so well. We hope she may return to us someday in the future.

Trainees

The practice continues to provide a training platform for GP trainees, Advanced Nurse Practitioner trainees and both Medical students and Physician Associate students. This will mean that throughout the year you may see different staff working with us.

Our trainees always have the support of the rest of our team when needed, and we are grateful to all our patients for always being very respectful and supportive of our training staff when they are consulting with them.

GP WORKING / PRACTICE WORKLOAD

2023 was a challenging year, both for Stonehaven Medical Group and for the NHS

as a whole. The Practice faced acute staffing pressures for a prolonged period of time, and this required a rapid change to the way we were working to ensure we could deliver a safe and high-quality service.

We had to revert back to a “Total Triage” system with the aim of seeing the most serious and urgent illnesses rapidly, the most complex patients in pre-planned appointments with the most appropriate clinicians, using the eConsult and telephone triage systems to help manage the patient contacts and demand.

This resulted in a very difficult year as we worked tirelessly to cope with the intense level of demand. It is a testament to all who worked in the practice that we continued to provide first class access to patients, excellent care and that we continued to deliver all our core and enhanced services despite these pressures.

We are very grateful to all our patients for their understanding and acceptance of the essential working practice changes we had to make in 2023. These continue in 2024 and, in fact, are now allowing us to provide a significant increase in both planned/pre-booked care and face to face appointments in comparison to the Covid pandemic.

However, the amount of work we are facing remains at a very high level with the “seen” workload in terms of appointments and phone calls only the tip of the iceberg - beneath this in the background a huge amount of work is being undertaken in relation to chronic disease management, medication safety and management, training and education, results and hospital letters, working with community nursing and care management teams, clinical reports, palliative care and many, many more.

In 2023 Stonehaven Medical Group staff recorded total activity of more than 350,000 separate patient related encounters or actions across the whole team – that’s approx. 6,500 per week!

The changes we had to make to cope with the workload did result in less GP appointments being available because the GPs were the team that managed the majority of the patient contacts via eConsult and telephone. In order to ensure this was delivered safely and effectively we were dealing with many more patient contacts per day than would have traditionally been the case as part of the triage system.

We know it has sometimes felt like it is difficult to see a GP, but we want to reassure you that GPs have always been, and will always be, available within the practice for patients who need them. We do lean heavily on our admin team, Nurses, Advanced Practitioners, Physiotherapists and Pharmacy teams who provide outstanding care and services.

As the range of options for treating and managing health conditions has expanded and become even more complex, we believe that the ‘Total Triage’ option gives our patients the best access possible to our services and ensures that we can help patients find the right treatment path for each individual.

It is an accepted and data proven fact that Scottish GP practices are busier than they have ever been. As a population, we are living longer but that means we accumulate more diseases and so need more help and support. Our percentage of over 65s continues to increase annually. The impact of covid19 has also meant that people wait

longer on hospital waiting lists and so need more input from their General Practice in the interim. This is all on a background of a national picture of issues recruiting and retaining clinical staff to work in General Practice.

MEDICINES MANAGEMENT

Did you know that millions of pounds are wasted every year by over ordering of medications. Having “just in case” supplies at home of many weeks or even months of medications is a huge factor. Some people also continue to order medications that they no longer take. Please consider if yourself or a relative are doing this and think about ways to avoid this waste which costs us all money as tax payers.

If everyone receiving prescriptions from NHS Grampian has a one month supply of medicine in their home, this amounts to approx. £10.5m of medicine stocks!

PATIENT PARTICIPATION GROUP (PPG)

As part of our goal of working more openly and closely with our patients and helping patients understand how we work and how best to use our services, we have restarted our PPG. We are very keen to have a diverse range of members to help us understand how we can best meet the needs of our patients. We are particularly keen to engage with senior school pupils, young parents and patients with chronic diseases, to help us provide the best possible service for you and we would welcome new members.

A particular focus for the PPG at present is to review and provide feedback on the practice website. We want this to be valuable resource for patients to use to help them find the information they need about the practice and about wider services, and how they can best manage their own health for the long term. If you would like to provide any feedback on the practice website, we would be very keen to hear from you.

You can contact the PPG via their email – ppg.stonehaven@gmail.com

