**Corbridge Medical Group**

**Patient Representation Group**

**Wednesday 14th December 2022, Corbridge Health Centre, 7pm**

**Minutes**

**In Attendance:**

DP, EC, MD, MM, AE, JJ (Practice Manager)

**Apologies for absence:**

PO, BC, Dr RB (GP Partner), NL (Reception Manager),

**Welcome and Introductions**

We welcomed EC to the group

**Patient Leaflet**

The patient leaflet had been updated and placed on the Website front page and a link to the leaflet had been broadcast via our Facebook page. JJ agreed to make paper copies available to pick up from the waiting room and to split the messages into power-point slides for display on the waiting room TV screen.

The Corbridge Matters editors had saved some space in the February edition for a piece from the practice and JJ would be writing an article focussing on the recent changes to online access and encouraging patients to make more use of the online and digital services available.

**New Online Access for Patients**

JJ described the changes to online access which came into effect from 9th December 22. The new facility can be accessed via the NHS App (which many patients have downloaded for their Covid passports) and also via Patient.co.uk.

Patients can now self-verify their identity without needing to come to the practice – using face recognition/passport details etc. on the NHS App.

These online access apps have been developed recently to provide more information from patients' medical records such as access to blood results, radiology results, letters, information from recent consultations as well as the appointment booking and prescription ordering facility which has been in use for a number of years. Access to this information will be prospective from 9th December 22 onwards.

Patients using the app will be able to access these services 24 hours a day, seven days a week and will free up telephone lines for other patients who are unable to use online services. The volume of calls into the Health Centre recently has been overwhelming and it was agreed that we should promote the online service in the coming weeks to maximise the efficiencies which can be gained by encouraging better use of this service. This will be particularly useful for patients who want to check if their blood results are back – the results will be visible online once they have been filed by the GP. Patients will also be able to see letters, consultation details, immunisations and diagnoses with links to further information about certain conditions, tests and treatments.

Members of the Patient Forum who already have online access were asked to have a look at the changes and see how useful this would be for them going forward and, if agreed, we will make this a standard part of our pathway for patients having blood tests, referrals and onward management of conditions which may require follow-up. Having the ability to check medical records for this information will empower patients to be more involved in their own care.

One potential consequence of this however would be if patients want to query the information on the app – we do not have capacity to discuss issues but we would invite patients to complete an eConsult (accessed via the website) if they have any questions or concerns about the information seen online.

**Better Use of Digital Technologies**

JJ took the opportunity to link the preceding discussion with some other new initiatives we now have access to as a practice which will enhance some of our services in the future:-

Texting a booking link – this system had worked extremely well for flu clinics this Autumn. Patients with mobile numbers were texted a booking link giving a choice of appointment dates and times in our flu clinics. This saved hundreds of letters and phone calls from patients whilst ensuring we had a very good uptake of flu vaccinations this year. We will be exploring the use of this technology further into 2023 and perhaps make this available for some blood test appointments, annual reviews and vaccinations.

Month of Birthday text reminders – from October onwards we have been texting our annual month of birthday review invitations to patients with mobile numbers. This has streamlined our process considerably and uptake has been very good.

Blood Results – we will encourage the use of Online Access for patients who attend for blood tests. Results will be visible online as soon as the test is filed by the GP and a comment will be visible next to the result to provide reassurance or follow-up instructions (although we will always make contact if repeat tests or follow-up appointments are required).

eConsults – this facility has been available on our website for a couple of years now and although use is fairly limited it does provide a good alternative to ringing the practice for some patients who find this difficult The eConsult service will direct patients to the most appropriate service (eg 999, 111 or GP) or will flag up more urgent issues within the information which is sent through to the practice in order to prioritise certain problem which should be treated urgently. The information comes into our secure email address and is monitored and dealt with by reception staff each day.

The Practice Website – we are planning some changes to our website so that health information and advice can be more readily accessed by patients. The NHS provides [**www.Patient.co.uk**](http://www.Patient.co.uk)which provides a range of resources to help patients understand their medical conditions and to help them decide when to contact the practice. Our website has been used very effectively during the pandemic to broadcast important information eg about Covid vaccination campaigns etc and we will continue to update the alerts on the home page to draw attention to new information or services.

Telephone auto-attendant – this is an important tool which we use to provide information without speaking to a receptionist using the various menu options. Patient Forum members were asked how effective this service is – it was suggested that the message should be kept reasonably short (no longer than the current one) but there were concerns about the estimated wait times which are generated by the queuing system and which are very inaccurate. JJ explained that this system is outside our control and is integrated with the telephone system software so we cannot alter this but JJ agreed to speak to our telecoms provider to see if the settings can be changed.

Prescription Line – call volumes have been extremely high over recent weeks and we can see that lots of patients who have online access are not using the prescription ordering facility. It was agreed that we would promote this in the next few weeks to try and cut down on call volumes which are making it very difficult to get through to the surgery.

One concern was raised about how these initiatives will affect patients who are unable to use online services or text messaging. JJ reassured the group that we will always be available by telephone but that by cutting down the current call volumes our staff will have more time to help those who need to speak to someone. Clinical care will be unchanged – this will always by personal contact with face to face or by telephone and there are no plans to change that.

**Friends and Family feedback**

The Friends and Family feedback received from patients in September, October and November was circulated prior to the meeting and issues which were highlighted were noted as follows:-

Car parking – more comments about this are appearing again – not much we can do other than monitor busy times and make adjustments to surgeries if possible.

Appointment delays – a number of comments were made regarding appointments running late and, again, it is very difficult to manage this when we are so busy. Receptionists will be reminded that it is helpful to tell patients how many patients are waiting ahead of them so help with expectations.

Signage – it was suggested that we provide some information on the TV screen about where the various rooms are located. Many patients are visiting the surgery for the first time (or perhaps after a long break during the pandemic). JJ agreed to put a presentation on the TV screen to give directions to the various rooms.

Receptionists attitude – a number of comments had been received in November (possibly from the same day) saying that the receptionist was rude or needed training. It was impossible to identify which member of staff this would have been but there are no new receptionists or changes in November which would explain this. Previous feedback has been very positive about the reception team. JJ agreed to feedback to the team so they could reflect on this.

**AOB**

MM described a research project she is participating in which is designed to follow patients aged over 80 who are living in their own homes independently. The study is called 'Ageing in Place' and the aims are to identify what services enable older patients to continue to remain at home. Julie reminded the group that we are a research-active practice and new studies come along from time to time which we promote by writing to eligible patients. It is good to know that patients are happy to get involved.

**Date of the next meeting**

It was agreed that Wednesday evenings are good for the majority and that the next meeting would be held on **Wednesday 8th March 2023 at 7pm**