

Wargrave Patient Participation Group Newsletter

The Patient Participation Group exists
to strengthen communications between patients and the surgery,
delivering positive health outcomes for the local community

Welcome to the February 2021 newsletter from the Wargrave Surgery PPG. Given the times we are living in, we find ourselves with much to update you on - specifically regarding Covid-19 and the vaccination program. Much progress has been made since our last newsletter and we can share this with you together with our understanding of what happens next. And response to our first health seminar was extremely positive so we have news of our plans to continue with these – in fact at the time of writing the second one will already have taken place.

Covid Clinics – December & January

Vaccinations for 80+ age group took place on 15 & 16 December and we were the first surgery in West Berkshire to receive the vaccine.

We are pleased to confirm now that just over 1,000 patients were vaccinated during the December clinic and in the subsequent three day session in January, 1170 were vaccinated – most with their second injection. In short, everyone over 80 who wanted one has received their vaccination in full. And at time of writing, a total of 2200 vaccinations have been carried out including care home residents, healthcare and social care staff.

Managing the surgery sessions was undeniably a mammoth task – one that was carried out with almost military precision – as any of you who were there will have witnessed! All the doctors, nurses and surgery staff were involved together with a virtual army of volunteers organised by Judith Stephenson-Hodges. You can read more of Judith's report separately in this magazine.

As one who has since received the first vaccination elsewhere, as a care home volunteer, I can confirm that my experience was not as smooth an operation as that at Wargrave! However all credit to vaccination clinics everywhere.

PPG Health Seminars

Covid 19 – up-date and the way forward

We were pleased to arrange this seminar for 20 January as the Covid situation changes rapidly and we know everyone would like more information. Andy Ferguson chaired proceedings and managed the following question and answer session. Dr. Jim Kennedy led this detailed presentation and covered local achievements to date, some of the challenges and how the vaccine program was expected to be rolled out.

He reported that our surgery has very much led the way locally and as was one of the first in the country to get the Pfizer vaccine in December. Leading a group of five local practices, with a total of 63,500 patients, our 80+ age group were successfully vaccinated with both their first and second doses and Dr. Kennedy is very pleased that uptake has been 93-94% - one of the highest in the country. Our eldest recipient is over 103 and we have several of about 100 yrs of age and many in their 90s.

The Pfizer vaccine did present challenges, needing to be defrosted from a temperature of -70 and having to be used within 3-4 days. Initially, once the vaccine had been delivered, it could not be moved off site until the surgery were given dispensation on Christmas Eve to vaccinate all residents of Sunrise and The Mount who had not tested positive for Covid in the previous 4 weeks. The practice is now looking to set up a separate local centre for Covid vaccinations in the disused fire station at Wargrave, leaving the surgery premises free to continue with its day-to-day appointments and healthcare.

However, moving forward it seems that (at time of writing on 20 Jan) 600 doses of the Astrazeneca vaccine are due into the surgery later this week enabling our doctors to begin delivering vaccinations, at the weekend, to those over 70 who are housebound – and subsequently the 75-79 and 70-74 age groups. Again our practice will be one of the first in the country to do so.

Dr. Kennedy stressed that all practices must follow strict guidelines in terms of priority groups. There is a powerful argument for vaccinating key groups such as police and teachers early in this program and further news on this is awaited. Meantime, it is hoped that the mid 60s age group will receive their first vaccination at the end of February.

In particular Dr. Kennedy stressed the following points:

- If you have tested positive for Covid you should wait 28 days before you have the vaccine.
- A vaccine will provide good protection after 21 days BUT you can still get Covid, you can still transmit it and you could still become ill though you are much, much less likely to be very ill.
- It is important to still take the safety precautions of distancing and mask wearing.
- Special clinics are being set up for those with symptoms of Long Covid – there is a facility in Reading. Please speak to your GP if you believe you might have this.
- Whilst 80% of Covid hospital admissions are in the 70+ age group, young people are still vulnerable.
- There is still reluctance out there. Please get vaccinated when you are contacted. However, local uptake has been very high which is great!

This is a summary of key points. To receive a recording of this seminar please email lisah@pursuitnha.com

How Gut Health affects your whole body

The PPG's first seminar on 11 January was very successful with 60 people attending. This topic was the most popular when we surveyed our patients and was expertly led by Dr. Jen Singh who has been working at the surgery for the last two years and has recently completed a Lifestyle Medicine Diploma and Lisa Sayers, a member of the PPG and a Personal Trainer, Nutritional Therapist and Lifestyle Coach. Andy Ferguson, our PPG Chairman chaired the seminar on Zoom and managed the interesting question and answer session which followed

Jen began by explaining the importance of food as information for our bodies as well as providing minerals and vitamins, antioxidants to minimize cellular damage, fibre and other organisms that live in our gut. She described how factors including stress and sleep influence our wellbeing which, if upset, is likely to result in illness. She talked also about 'blue zones' which are areas of the world where a higher than usual number of people live to 100 and what their secret is. She also covered diseases associated with an unhealthy gut microbiome.

Dr. Mark Puddy, who attended the seminar, was intrigued by the relatively new scientific discoveries relating to the role of gut flora and listened intently as Lisa explained how 90% of cells in our body are bacteria and fungi and only 10% are our own human cells! She drew an interesting analogy with owning a pet and told of the importance of feeding and nurturing these organisms by consuming beneficial food and drink. And it seems our guts work best when we eat fresh and seasonal food grown locally rather than flown half way round the world.

Dr. Puddy was particularly interested in the question of how certain drugs affect gut organisms – for example lansoprazole which reduces acid reflux and indigestion but which can have an adverse affect on the gut bacteria. There is clearly a balance needed here - if troublesome conditions can only be controlled with medication, then it is reasonable to continue but diet and lifestyle should be adjusted too in order to reduce the likelihood of indigestion – not eating late at night and perhaps taking supplements to boost the important gut organisms.

The science these days is telling us that by sticking to sensible plans for eating and lifestyle management, we are likely to increase our chances of staying healthy for longer.

There was a great deal of useful information only some of which is mentioned here. A copy of the slides used is available - please email lisah@pursuitnha.com

Next Seminar: Diabetes for non-diabetics

Do you think you could be at risk of diabetes or would you simply like to know more about the causes and symptoms and what action you can take to avoid becoming diabetic? Join Dr. Mark Puddy and Senior Practice Nurse, Sharon Tanner on 10 March at 7pm on Zoom to find out more. As usual this will take the form of a 30 minute presentation followed by a question and answer session. Numbers are limited so please email healthseminar@pursuitnha.com after 15 February if you would like to attend. And please submit any questions within your email.