



Dr Outen – one man's view

Following Dr Outen's retirement last year, we asked him if he would give us his views on General Practice and the changes that have taken place over the last thirty years:

"I decided I wanted to be a GP even before I went to medical school and my experiences there strengthened that view. When I joined Drs Crook and Berry in 1980 one thing that was particularly noticeable was the depth of knowledge they had about patients' lives. This takes years to acquire and you never stop learning. It is invaluable in consultations. Illness is often precipitated or exacerbated by life events and the pattern seen in an individual usually repeats itself. I think patients value continuity and a GP who knows them and it is sad to see our political masters intent on smashing this due to sheer ignorance.

In 1980 I could refer a patient to any hospital in the country, unlike the pseudo-choice that exists now whereby you only

have choice if you don't care where you go. We had GP beds at the community hospital and communications with consultants were far better than now. GPs led the way with computers, using them to improve patient care. It saddens me that, after all the work that was put in, computerised records have been so corrupted in the last few years as to destroy much of their value.

We used to do our own nights and weekends on call, in addition to day work. The 60hr continuous stretch over the weekend was particularly exhausting but back then calls were generally for emergencies. Then politicians decided that out-of-hours should be a convenience service. By the time of the new GP contract most of us had found it impossible to continue and had passed this work to a deputising service. Their charge per call was as much as GPs got paid to look after a patient for a year so it's little wonder that, given the chance, GPs opted

out. The government thought that with the £6k it paid each GP (less than £1 per hour), private companies would perform a much better job. We know what happened.

Politics now dominates the NHS and management has mushroomed. Back in 1980 general practice was run from an office in Clacton. That is still there but in addition we now have Primary Care Trusts – five in Essex. Ours alone employs over 400 administrative staff.

Perhaps the worst change has been Alan Milburn's decision to base priorities on *wants* rather than *needs*. This has resulted in the sickest patients getting the worst service. At Beechwood Surgery we always tried to resist this but the multiple biased surveys are gradually tightening the screw. Next time you are asked to complete one ask yourself 'what would I wish for if I were really ill?' You never know when you might be in that position."

Dr Tuppen moves on

Further changes to the Beechwood Surgery team were announced in April when Dr Tuppen revealed that he would be leaving at the end of the month. As we reported in earlier

newsletters, Dr Tuppen has been closely involved with the Brentwood Community Hospital and has now decided to devote more time to this facility. He is also going to

be spending more time in the area of diabetes care, another of his key medical interests. We shall be inviting him to give us his views in a future newsletter



Two new doctors join the team

Two new doctors have joined the Surgery to replace Dr Outen and Dr Tuppen. The following details are supplied for your information.

Dr Helen Pring went to Guy's, King's and St Thomas' Medical School in London. Her jobs for General Practice training were in the Chelmsford hospitals, finishing with a year at a semi-rural practice in Boreham in 2008. Since then she has locumed in a variety of

practices, including 11 months in Writtle before joining Beechwood Surgery. Along the way she has gained diplomas in child health and family planning.

Dr Anoushka Luthra graduated in 2005 from Guy's, King's and St. Thomas' School of Medicine, King's College, London. Her training has been in hospitals in Dartford, Southend and Basildon; incorporating jobs in Psychiatry,

Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Care of the Elderly Medicine, Endocrinology, Urology, and Accident and Emergency.

She has now been at Beechwood as a Registrar for over a year and has thoroughly enjoyed her time here and is looking forward to staying on and building a permanent base.

Patient Survey Results



At a recent PPG meeting the results of latest patient survey were presented. The survey covers the South West Essex Primary Care Trust (PCT) area and includes approximately eighty surgeries. The survey covers a number of areas from the physical condition of the surgery (eg: cleanliness), communications (eg ease of getting through on the

phone), opening times and the satisfaction with consultations with both doctors and nurses.

The PPG were pleased to note that the surgery received positive ratings in at least ten categories, including ease of access and cleanliness. There was also a high level of confidence (95%) in the doctors with listening and planning receiving particularly good

responses. On the negative side the major problem is getting through on the telephone. This is an area that will hopefully improve if current plans to install an on-line appointments system are fulfilled. See article below.

The patient survey is carried out on a quarterly basis and another report will be available soon. We shall keep you informed when the results are known.

Saturday Morning Arrangements Change



The surgery has been pressurised into making Saturday mornings all pre-bookable appointments by the PCT. This is because the contract with the PCT clearly states that the "extended hours" appointments (i.e.: over and above the normal opening hours)

are to be pre-bookable to suit those who work office hours.

In the past it was argued that patients wanted the flexibility to access these appointments on the day, so a mix of pre-bookable and book on the day was offered. However, since the

patient satisfaction score on this point (see patient survey above) has fallen since last year, the surgery is no longer able to continue with this arrangement. Effectively, the surgery has had to "fall in line" with the procedure at other surgeries.

Future Developments



There are two projects in the pipeline that the PPG has been assisting the Surgery with. The first is the production of a credit card sized **information card** to be distributed to every patient household. The card will provide essential Surgery information, including telephone numbers and addresses. It is designed to be easily carried around and will advise how to access the surgery and all the services which are available. It will also be complimented by a new more detailed information leaflet currently being planned by the surgery.

The second project is the installation of an **On Line Booking System**. This will enable patients to

book appointments over the internet and hopefully help to relieve the pressure on the telephone booking system. Some members of the PPG have been testing a pilot system. One member reports:

“The system being trialed seems to be very user friendly with the password being easily recalled. The menu is concise and clear and most importantly there is a list of doctors who are available within a two week window and what times that they are available.

To book an appointment is just a matter of clicking on the appropriate day and time and to cancel is just as simple. At present there is no option to make

nurse appointments. This system is of considerable use to those who want to be able to choose the time of their appointment, assuming that it's not urgent, whereby the normal stages of making an appointment would then apply. If a link is made to the repeat prescription facility on the web site then this could be very useful.

As stated, one advantage of this system is that waiting times to contact reception by phone should decrease. In addition the number of people who do not attend appointments would also, hopefully, decrease as the choice of appointments is entirely in patients' hands and it will also be easier to cancel them.”

Special Offer from Fabulous And Beautiful (FAB)

FAB is offering a FREE beauty session for those ladies who are about to start or currently undergoing chemotherapy or radiotherapy.



Their beauty consultants will offer advice on:

Dressing with style and elegance
Restyling with advice on hair and make-up

Sessions are
Mondays 11am – 2pm
St Margaret's Hospital
Epping

Bring a friend and make new friends. Stay as long as you like!
Small intimate groups / tea, coffee and biscuits.
Free goody bag!

For further information and to book call Laura on 01279 827396.

How to contact us:

Please give us your comments and suggestions. Please hand them in writing to reception or alternatively, email us at ppg@beechwood.nhs.net