

## Westhoughton & Blackrod

# PPG NEWS

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### Chairman's Chatter

#### CHAIRMAN'S CHATTER

Welcome to the Summer edition of the PPG Newsletter.

Barry, our editor, has some interesting articles for you including a summary of the Practice/ PPG Annual General Meeting; his experiences meeting a Health Improvement Practitioner, an article on Pharmacies and a quick update on Covid. We are sad that Dr Helen Kavanagh is leaving and we wish her well.

Our aim over the next few months is to grow the PPG – if you have not already joined, please do and also encourage your friends and neighbours too! We consider that all registered members of the Practice to be members of the PPG, but due to the Data Protection Act, we can only make contact with them if they apply to join the PPG.

Please do not hesitate to get in touch with us at [unsworthppg@gmail.com](mailto:unsworthppg@gmail.com)  
Finally, Pete, our publisher, has updated the format of the Newsletter – we hope you enjoy it!

Chris

# *A Fond Farewell To Dr Kavanagh*



**Dr Helen Kavanagh**

It is with great sadness that we would like to inform our patients that Dr Helen Kavanagh, one of our GP Partners, is retiring from the practice due to ill health. Dr Kavanagh has worked at the Unsworth Group Practice since 2017 and is held in high regard by her patients and colleagues. We are extremely grateful for all her hard work and dedication over the past 5 years, she will be sorely missed and we wish her well as she spends time with her family.

# “Hello and Farewell...”

Many of you will, we are sure know and remember the surgery phlebotomist, Gail, well after drawing what must be thousands of samples of blood, she has decided to pack up her syringe and retire... We wish her a long and happy retirement

Coming in to take Gail’s place, and unpacking her syringes we welcome to the practice, Jill Bithell.. We are sure many of you will get to meet Jill, in the future, so say, hello and welcome! Now just a sharp scratch!

Two of our “Advanced Nurse Practitioners” Dawn Chadwick and Joanne Dickinson have left the practice. We wish them well, and thank them both for their service to the patients of the surgeries.

Joining, at the beginning of June, we welcome Lucy Snape, who is taking up the position of Nursing Associate. She will be a very welcome addition to the clinical staff, and we are looking forward to meeting her...

Finally, at present, the practice is actively recruiting both Clinical and non-clinical staff to fill vacancies within the Unsworth Group.



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## PPG and Unsworth Group Practice Annual General Meeting

On Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> March, the Practice/PPG Annual meeting was held at Whites Hotel Middlebrook. This meeting should be held every year but has not been held for the last two years due to Covid.

Our Chairman, Chris, has kindly written a summary of exactly what was discussed at the meeting and the new PPG core group for the year 2022/2023.

### **Attendance**

First, many thanks to those of you who let me know that they were unable to make the meeting. The Practice was well represented by the Partners and management team. 25 people including seven members of the PPG Core group and three family members were in the meeting with an additional five people who attended (and asked questions!) on line. This is a spectacularly poor attendance considering the Practice has over 20000 patients! Twelve people left after the Practice had finished their presentation! So, the PPG final section was very poorly attended!



### **Structure / Organisation of Practice**

Dr Hall, Dr Lloyd and Dr Matta explained the new management structure in the Practice along with Stephanie Moore, the Business and Governance Manager, and Bec Lister, the Patient and Staff Liaison Lead. They talked about telephones, appointments and the Practice extension.

### **Telephones**

The new telephone system was introduced some months ago but still has issues. The system is managed by the IT team at Bolton Hospital who have a huge backlog. It is estimated that it will take a further three to six months before patients will see any significant improvement when telephoning the Practice.

### **Practice Extension**

Dr Khan explained that there is currently no magic solution to the shortage of space at Peter House for both clinical and administrative staff.

The Practice have some plans to create space by reorganising areas and reallocating the use of some rooms.

### **Appointments**

An Interesting statistic shows that between 1st January and 23rd March the Practice has consulted 9275 patients (which is 45% of the total number of patients) and has offered 26015 appointments. However, in February 5% and in March 4.4% of the appointments allocated were not taken up. These DNAs (Did Not Attend) are a major problem as they equate to 5 days lost for the equivalent of one professional per week.

It is also interesting that 36% of all appointments in February and 35% of all appointments in March were telephone appointments - many of which were by the choice of the patient.

Generally, overall, we have greater demands on the surgery than before Covid. Of course, our expectations are greater too - if Amazon can deliver tomorrow, why can we not get an appointment tomorrow?

The surgery does have urgent appointments for 'today' if we fight the 8 o'clock queue, but routine appointments can take up to four weeks!. (32 days)

On-line booking of appointments will start again in the next few months but meanwhile patients can book non-urgent appointments online using the 'online consultation' page available on the practice website.

### **Pharmacies**

Christine Strawbridge talked about being a practicing pharmacist in the community.

She emphasised that pharmacists are available to diagnose minor ailments and there is no obligation to use a specific pharmacy -if you are unhappy with your current pharmacy, feel free to change!



### **Social Media and Website**

Bec Lister talked about and showed some sample pages of the updated practice website. She emphasised and explained the updated 'self-help' section of the website.

(At this point, the Practice left the meeting, with 12 members of the audience)

### **Election of the PPG Core**

Prior to the meeting there were three vacancies for members of the PPG Core group and only one volunteer to join it!



### **Newsletter**

Barry Sloan talked about the newsletters to date and outlined some of the items that will appear in the next issue.

### **PPG Core Members**

The PPG Core can be contacted by email at [unsworthppg@gmail.com](mailto:unsworthppg@gmail.com)

The Core members are:

Chair                    Chris McKellen

Vice Chair            Barry Sloan

Members             Martin Corr, Pete Duffy, Carol Ensor, Chris Hill, Pauline Lee, Christine Strawbridge, John Strawbridge, Susan Wood

Finally ...

As usual if the PPG Core can help you in any way, please do not hesitate to contact us by email at [Unsworthppg@gmail.com](mailto:Unsworthppg@gmail.com)



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## **Hello, Chairman Chris!**

**T**hey say, if you want a job doing, ask a busy person. Well, when the PPG needed a chairman, the busiest person in the room was Chris McKellen, so we all knew we were onto a winner!

So, for our summer edition of the PPG newsletter, we had to move fast and catch up with Chris to ask him to tell us about his background and how he became our Chairman.

So, Chris, how did the career begin? *“Following an apprenticeship and at the same time studying for a degree (part time) I became a manufacturing engineer for a USA based conglomerate, here in the UK. I held several positions in the company and progressed into management. I held positions with a couple of other companies, until I was given the opportunity of a lifetime....”*

Really, what was that? *“Well, it was to spend 23 million dollars! “*

On yourself? *“I wish! No, it was to build a new factory to start production in Shanghai, China, where I lived for two and half years.”*

So, you can make pretty good egg fried rice? *“Hmmm I’m sure my wife would not agree, but I actually really like Chinese food!”*

So, what happened after that? *“On my return to the UK, I led the European purchasing group for an automotive components company. Following that I became a management consultant and worked with one of the most famous consultancies in the world. I had to implement business improvement techniques and change, in many famous name organisations. “*

Wow, sounds like a tough job... *“It was, but very enjoyable when your efforts start to bear fruit and you can see what benefits it brings to a company.”*

So, what about away from work, it sounds like you didn’t have much time to yourself.

*“You are right, but I became a governor of Westhoughton high school as well as a trustee of a charity supporting people with learning difficulties. This was over a period of 20 years.”*

Hmmm, sounds like your opening statement was right! You are a very busy person! So, what are your hopes for leading the Unsworth PPG? *“I hope that by leading the PPG here at the Unsworth Group, we can suggest changes to make this an “outstanding” practice. We are by far and away the largest GP practice in the Bolton area with over 20,500 patients. This is a good practice, a very good practice, everyone at the PPG, staff and patients want to make it even better!”*

Thanks Chris, for giving us that insight to your career, sounds like you are going to be as busy as ever ....

## *HIP... HIP... hurrah. (On a cold rainy Tuesday Morning...)*

Now you might think that the HIP we are talking about, is that large ball and socket joint at the top of the leg, and yes that's where you will find your hip. But, in the group practice we have another kind of HIP... and that's the "Health Improvement Practitioner" team. I was surprised when I got the text saying that I was to be offered the opportunity to book an appointment. Plus, you know, I just had to go along and see what this was all about. At present, the message goes out to the over 40's. I guess I just about fall into that category... Well, alright, maybe a few years over that..... Plus like most people, of a certain age, I'd put on a couple of extra pounds over lockdown. So, appointment booked, here goes.

Now I am a bit of an early person, if you know what I mean, so the 8.00am appointment suited me perfectly. Into Peter House I go, mask on, booked in, sat down, and like you do, started to think about all the stuff I thought was going to come out during the appointment!

The new P.A system announced my name and room number. (That new P.A is 1000 times better than the old muffled one) So, off I go ready to be put through the mill for all the things I do, but I know I shouldn't!

Knocking on the door, I am greeted with a cheery "Come in" and behind her desk is Wendy Parker, with a smile that is too good for 8.00am on a wet Tuesday morning... She easily put my fears aside by telling me exactly what the appointment was about, and how by doing some simple checks, could spot any early symptoms of things that might give me more trouble in the future...

Now you don't need me to tell you some of the obvious questions you get asked. Like. Do you smoke? No in my case... Do you drink? Well, yes, I do a bit, Ok how much? Hmmm tricky... How much do you weigh? On the scales please... Right let's check your blood pressure, (It's a bit higher after the drink question!) Pulse is next, yes, that's fine, phew! Now then I see we gave you a blood test less than a year ago, and everything was fine... another phew!

Now, lifestyle questions, how much exercise do you do? Again having a Labrador sized dog gets my steps per day up a bit as well, as I do try and keep as fit as I can.... What's your diet like? Got to admit, I do have a passion for Chocolate Hob Nobs... Hmmm, might have to cut down a bit there!

But basically things came out OK, for a guy my age... So, all things considered I suppose I got a pass..

Then Wendy and I had a chat about what I should continue to do to keep as healthy as possible.

Let's face it, no one wants to get ill, no one wants to get injured, if we do not have to see a doctor or one of the clinical team, then so much the better. Most of us can all do just a bit more to look after our own health, obviously, some of the patients need to have clinical intervention. But the more we can do ourselves, it makes sense to do it...

Was it a worthwhile appointment, absolutely, I came away with ideas, things I had not thought about, and actually feeling a lot better, that our practice had someone who does care about our health...?

Oh, by the way, right at the end, I did drop a bit of a bombshell... in so much as I said... By the way, Wendy, I am the person who writes all the articles for the PPG newsletter, I think it would be great to write up my own experience, what do you think? After taking just a couple of seconds to think about what I had just said, she smiled and said. "What a good idea, I think it would be great to let everyone know about the Health Improvement Practitioner team, and let them know just what we do"

So, there you have it, if you get the text message, go along, it's well worthwhile, and honestly, they don't bite!

## *The chemistry in our community.*

In our last PPG newsletter, we outlined the role of the Practice pharmacist, and just what an important job they do in checking the medication we are prescribed, and the cross checking of interactions that might happen if taken with another medication. I for one, was unaware of just how much work was undertaken by the surgery's pharmacy team.

However, if you are of a certain age (a bit like me, I suppose) then you will have been no stranger to popping in to seeing your local chemist if you had a cough, cold, headache, scuffed knee, etc. For me growing up in Deane, it was Timothy Whites chemist. That shop had a certain smell, I can still remember. You went in and there were scales to weigh babies, scales to weigh grownups, and all manner of bottles and packets of things to make you feel better.

Fast forward to today, 2022, and although the name might have changed to pharmacy, the advice and help available is as useful as it was all those years ago for me.

Our local pharmacies are a fantastic resource for our community, and the pharmacist are always willing to help and suggest things that you may not have thought of. Plus, if you need to see a doctor or one of the other clinicians, they will give you good advice on what you need to do.

These days, prescriptions that are issued by the surgery are sent electronically to the pharmacy of your choice, for many of us registered with the Unsworth Group, this could be the pharmacy located at the top of the car park, but the choice is yours! At the end of this article, I have listed some of the other pharmacies in our area. There are even pharmacies in the large supermarkets as well, like Asda and Tesco at Middlebrook.

We are so lucky in our PPG to have a pharmacist as a member, if you did manage to attend the AGM earlier this year, you will have heard her explain in detail the role the community pharmacist plays. You can even get prescriptions sent to a local pharmacy if you are away on holiday in this country. (Something I was unaware of)

So, next time you are feeling a bit under the weather, why not have a chat to your local community pharmacist. You will always get great advice.

Westhoughton Pharmacies:-

Rowland Pharmacy, Peter House Car Park, Captain Lees Road.

Rigby and Higginson, 140 Church Street.

Rowlands Pharmacy 44 Market Street.

Manor Pharmacy. 9 Hindley Road, Daisy Hill.

## *Covid... It's still with us...*

### *Spring Booster!*

**Y**es, I know we have covered this in every issue of the PPG newsletter, and yes, you probably by now know more about this topic than you would like to... But the fact is that Covid is still with us...

As I write this article, just before the Platinum Jubilee celebrations, and long Bank holiday weekend. I read that Rt. Rev. Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury will not be attending the Queens Jubilee thanksgiving service, because he has contracted.... Covid.

The last set of statistics I looked at from the Office of National Statistic was that one in every fifty people in the UK is estimated to have the virus.... So, we still need to be careful.

You might have seen that the Covid clinics at the Peter House surgery have been back in action. The (fantastic) volunteers were back out there, supporting the clinical staff in the building. The spring booster programme was set up to give vaccinations to the over 75's and those who were identified as being vulnerable or "at risk".

Will there be further clinics, again at the time of writing we are not sure if the spring booster programme will be extended to those who are in lower age groups. However, if they are, and if you are contacted, then the advice is to come along and get that booster....

As someone, who is fully vaccinated, and who has recently managed to catch Covid (from who knows where) then I can testify, from first hand knowledge what its like to have the virus. In my case I still have a cough over 4 weeks afterwards, and looking this up on the NHS website, this is quite common....



"I'll give you something to ease the pain."

Finally, we know how frustrating it can be when you come along and have to wait to get your vaccination, the staff inside, do their utmost to get patients through as fast as possible, so your understanding and being a patient patient, is really appreciated.