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To All Barnabas PPG Members ...
[Printed copies to those PPG members without email]

[If you can't read any of the attached documents, or want printed copies of anything mentioned, please contact me and I'll try to send you a copy.]

Welcome to the December bulletin for Barnabas PPG members.

PPG News

PPG Meeting – Wednesday 11 December -- AGM

Our next meeting is next week on Wednesday 11 December, 1300 hrs in St Barnabas Church Hall.
As this is our AGM, the agenda will be:

1. Introductions & Apologies
2. Approve Minutes of Previous Meeting [attached]
3. Annual Report [attached]
4. Election of Chairman and Vice-Chairman
5. 2020 Meeting Dates & Speakers
6. "How to be a Better Patient" Discussion [attached]
7. Practice Updates
8. Other PPG Updates, Matters Arising, AOB

The minutes of our October meeting, my Annual Report and the list of possible contents for a "Be a Better Patient" leaflet are attached.

I intend that we discuss the "Be a Better Patient" ideas list (which is much too long for a leaflet) and see if there is consensus for the focus.

I will be making printed copies of my Annual Report available in the waiting area after the meeting.

Please come to the meeting if you possibly can, and hopefully we'll have volunteers to be Chairman or Vice-Chairman.

Meet the Patients

We are planning to be in the waiting area again on afternoon of Thursday 19 December for our last "Meet the Patients" session this year. This is where we chat to other patients, answer their questions, tell them something about the PPG's work, and if possible demonstrate the various GP online services. If you can come along and help, or just want to drop by for a chat, you will be very welcome.

I will set 2020 dates for "Meet the Patients" following the AGM when next year's PPG meeting dates have been agreed.

Many thanks to Noreen Marshall and Ewa Siwec for hosting the last "Meet the Patents".

Barnabas Bulletin

The December issue of the Practice's newsletter, *Barnabas Bulletin*, has been slightly delayed – which is why this bulletin is also slightly late; I was hoping to attach the *Barnabas Bulletin*. I will circulate a copy as soon as it is available – hopefully sometime next week.

Local Healthcare News

North West London CCGs Merger

As previously reported the eight CCGs in North West London are planning to merge into one – they already collaborate very closely, and they see efficiencies in being a single CCG. The latest news I can find is that the formal merger is now planned for April 2021 in order to allow time for the required planning. More news when it is available.

The eight CCGs are: Brent, Central London, Ealing, Hammersmith & Fulham, Harrow, Hillingdon, Hounslow, West London.

For those interested there is a short animated video about the merger at <https://www.powtoon.com/online-presentation/cUofSM7MYKb/>.

General NHS News

GPs Vote to Reduce Patient Home Visits

A couple of weeks ago the BBC reported that doctors have voted to reduce the number of home visits they do and the BMA (British Medical Association, effectively the doctors' trade union) will try to negotiate the GP contract to remove home visits as a contractual requirement. However this is almost certain to be strongly opposed by the government (whoever they turn out to be).

While as patients we might feel this is regrettable, one can see the GPs' point. When they are under increasing stress and workload home visits take a great deal of time: a GP can see 5 or 6 patients in the medical centre in the time it takes to complete one home visit. There are also concerns about the safety of GPs calling alone on patients they perhaps do not know.

But do note that this does not mean GPs will never do home visits; they will still be needed, and where appropriate made, for the elderly, terminally ill, and vulnerable patients.

The BBC report is online at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-50527179>.

PHE Weekly National Influenza Report

The flu season is upon us, and the incidence of illness is going up, currently it seems pretty much in line with expectations. Where it has been tested it appears the flu strains circulating are mainly those in this year's vaccine. However, reading the PHE (Public Health England) weekly flu report issued last week it is worrying how poor flu vaccination rates are. Up to week 47 (week ending 24 November) reported figures for England show that take-up in eligible groups was roughly:

- Under 65s in at risk group: 33%
- Pregnant women: 35%
- Over 65s: 66%
- 2 & 3 year-olds: 21%
- Primary School children: 15% to 17% (varying by school year)

Frankly these figures are appalling and noticeably lower than at the corresponding time last year. **It isn't too late to get vaccinated now!**

Flu vaccine is the best protection we have against an unpredictable virus that can cause unpleasant illness in children and severe illness and death among at-risk groups. The more people who are vaccinated, the harder it is for flu to pass from person to person – this is the so-called "herd immunity", and it is hugely important. However, like all vaccinations, the flu jab is not 100% effective and protection may vary, but if you do get flu after vaccination it is likely to be milder and shorter-lived than it would otherwise be – as I found out last winter.

Flu vaccination is very safe and serious side effects are extremely rare. You may have a mild fever and aching muscles for a couple of days after having the vaccine, and your arm may be a bit sore where you were injected. Otherwise ill effects are extremely unlikely. The vaccination does not give you flu.

For those who are interested you can find the PHE Weekly Flu Reports at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/weekly-national-flu-reports-2019-to-2020-season>.

NHS "Help Us, Help You" Campaign

This is a new NHS publicity campaign for this winter which urges people over the age of 65 to seek help at the first signs of a winter illness. It aims to help the NHS manage winter pressures by supporting people to stay well. The TV adverts set out to demonstrate that no one should suffer winter ailments in silence and it encourages people to talk to a community pharmacist about how to manage winter bugs before they get worse. Community pharmacists can help with over-the-counter medications for many common ailments, saving a the need for a doctor's appointment.

There's more about keeping well in winter at <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/keep-warm-keep-well/>.

NHS Campaign to Help Patients Avoid Long Hospital Stays

Another new campaign, "Where Best Next?" which is targeting NHS staff, aims to help tens of thousands more people avoid lengthy stays in hospital. It is being rolled out nationally as part of the *NHS Long Term Plan*. The campaign encourages NHS doctors, nurses and other staff to ask themselves "Why not home? Why not today?" when planning care for patients recovering from an operation or illness – it can be demonstrated that patients do better, both physically and psychologically, if they are (safely) at home rather than in hospital.

There's a lot more on this at <https://www.england.nhs.uk/urgent-emergency-care/reducing-length-of-stay/reducing-long-term-stays/>.

Newsletters

As usual here are the latest newsletters I've received containing further news and information which may be of interest.

- Ealing CCG newsletter for PPGs is online at <https://www.ealingccg.nhs.uk/media/170642/PPG-Newsletter-November-19.pdf>.
- NAPP monthly eBulletin is attached.

More in early January. Meanwhile wishing everyone a peaceful Christmas and a healthy and happy New Year.

Keith

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