

Keith Marshall

Subject: FW: Barnabas Patient Voices Monthly Update, October
Attachments: PPG_Minutes_20210915.pdf; Voice.pdf; In_Touch_120.pdf

To All [Barnabas Patient Voices](#) Members ...
[Printed copies to those 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 October update for [Barnabas Patient Voices](#) members. There seems to be a lot happening at the moment, so we've got a packed update this month.

Coronavirus

02/10. Vaccination Status

	% having been Vaccinated with:	
	1 Dose	2 Doses
Ealing	66%	59%
London	67%	61%
England	90%	82%
UK	90%	83%

02/10. Case Rate (per 100,000) in Last 7 Days

Ealing	243	↑
London	206	↑
England	338	↑
UK	358	↑

Ealing has London's Highest Infection Rate

According to Ealing Today, at the beginning of September Ealing had the highest infection rate of any London borough, with a hotspot in Hanwell.

Report at <http://www.ealingtoday.co.uk/info/eacovid021.htm>.

Winter Plan: the Government's Toolkit to Combat Covid

A couple of weeks ago, Healthwatch Ealing summarised the government's plan for controlling Covid over the coming winter.

Article at <https://healthwatchealing.org.uk/news/winter-plan-what-does-governments-toolkit-to-combat-covid-include/>.

Vaccinating 12 to 15 Year-olds

As we've probably all heard in the news, Covid vaccination is now being offered to all 12 to 15 year-olds; but they're getting only a single shot. This means the only part of the population now not eligible for vaccination are the under-12s – unfortunately this is the cohort where cases seem to be rising fastest.

Guardian article from a couple of weeks ago at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/sep/13/uk-children-aged-12-to-15-to-be-offered-covid-jab>.

Booster Shots

Booster (third shot) vaccination is now being rolled out to all the original first nine tranches of those eligible for vaccination – as long as they had their second shot more than six months ago – which means those eligible for a booster jab include:

- Those living in residential care homes for older adults
- All adults aged 50 years or over
- Frontline health and social care workers
- All those aged 16 to 49 years with underlying health conditions that put them at higher risk of severe COVID-19
- Adult household contacts of immunosuppressed individuals.

I'm not quite sure how this is to be achieved as we've closed down most of the original static vaccination centres.

NHS articles at <https://www.england.nhs.uk/2021/09/nhs-encourages-people-to-get-covid-booster-jab-as-bookings-open/> and <https://www.england.nhs.uk/2021/09/nhs-invites-one-million-more-people-for-covid-booster-jabs/>.

Flu and Covid Jabs Safe to be Given Together

A fairly small, but important, study has concluded that it is safe to give flu and Covid vaccinations at the same time.

Article at <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2021/sep/30/flu-covid-jabs-safe-same-time-study>.

Long Covid Less Common than Feared

A large study by the Office of National Statistics (ONS) suggests that Long Covid affects around 3% of those infected, rather than the earlier estimate of 10%. While this should be good news it must be remembered that there is no generally agreed definition of Long Covid, and it is not well understood, so the results do depend on how the study defines Long Covid and hence what it measures.

BBC report at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-58584558>.

[All data from <https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/details/>, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-55274833>, <https://covid.joinzoe.com/data>]

Barnabas Patient Voices News

Barnabas Patient Voices Meetings

The minutes from our meeting on 15 September are attached.

Our next full meeting is on Wednesday 17 November at 0900hrs over Zoom.

Link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81385054127?pwd=SWtjVmJPbHlETEE3aGdtaTlpNnNSUT09>

Meeting ID: 813 8505 4127

Passcode: 665045

Note this is a revised link; the previously announced link will not work.

Please try to attend these meetings as they are your opportunity to feedback and influence the Practice, and to find out what's happening – they're there for your benefit!

Our next informal video calls are on Monday 11 October at 1100, and Friday 22 October at 1500, again over Zoom.

Link (for both calls): <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/7279594414?pwd=VmYwODdoWGg2eTFvTlVjVlZyRmhSQT09>

Meeting ID: 727 959 4414

Passcode: 149417

I intend to continue these informal calls at least until the end of the year, and then review them.

2021-23 Plans & Development

Having completed the rebranding and renaming of the group at the beginning of last month, I've been working on the next initiatives to enhance the group and our impact. Although they are not yet ready for release, I hope to be announcing the following at or before the 17 November meeting:

- The **Barnabas Patient Voices** website which is nearing completion. (Anyone willing to test this, please get in touch.)
- A new design, and online capability, for the Practice's newsletter, *Barnabas Bulletin*. Subject to the Practice's agreement, we hope to relaunch *Barnabas Bulletin* in early 2022. (This is already in demo form for the Practice's consideration.)
- Our leaflet *Getting the Most from Your Appointment* which we pended at the start of the pandemic. Again subject to the Practice's agreement.

Watch this space for more information.

I am also working on a new (online) membership system, which is integrated with the new website. I have yet to work out how to migrate your contact details from the current spreadsheet to the new system, and give you a login so you can (a) update your details and (b) access to restricted areas of the website. Note that this will NOT hook in to the Practice's online systems, but will remain totally separate. And it should be a one-time task for new members to set this up. We may need to discuss this at the November meeting. (I will also have to keep a separate small register of those few who don't have online access, so they can be mailed with things like this update.)

And after that I will be building an online demo version of the Practice's annual patient survey, so we can run this electronically for the Practice sometime next year.

So there's a lot still to do.

Practice News

Staff Updates

As has been noted in the minutes of the last couple of meetings, there are several Staff changes at the practice.

- Receptionist Gill Hunt retired at the end of August after many years with the Practice. We wish her a long and happy retirement.
 - Our long-standing Phlebotomist Shelina also retired at the end of September. Again we wish her a long and happy retirement.
 - On Reception, Isobel Hanson joined at the end of July.
 - We have a new Phlebotomist & HCA, Sheryl Sullivan, who started in early August.
 - Pharmacy Technician Sandip Sodha joined in early September and is working alongside our Clinical Pharmacist, Paresh Virji.
 - And finally we have a new Salaried GP, Dr Rebecca Carey, who is due to start around the middle of this month.
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General NHS News

Shopping Centre Clinics

New one-stop shops for scans and tests are to be set up in community venues, including shopping centres, in England in order to tackle the NHS's backlog and waiting lists.

Report at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-58755380>.

GPs Under Pressure

There have been a number of reports in the last month about the pressure which GPs are under. This is true for our GPs, and it is clear it is a major issue right across the country.

- There was a *Guardian* report that GPs are finding it increasingly hard to guarantee safe care. See <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2021/sep/10/gps-england-finding-increasingly-hard-guarantee-safe-care-doctors>
- And a BBC report about how GPs in Oxfordshire are working in their free time in order to keep up with demand. See <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-oxfordshire-58582330>.
- Another BBC report questioned whether we can ever return to the previous level of face-to-face GP appointments. Although centred in Scotland this is true for the whole of the nation. See <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-58481878>.

Flu Vaccinations

This year's flu vaccination programme has been running now for several weeks, and although there have been some delays in supply eligible patients are now being invited by the Practice. If you are eligible, then please wait to be invited.

There's more details on the programme at <https://healthwatchealing.org.uk/news/the-national-influenza-flu-immunisation-programme/>.

Free Prescriptions for Over-60s

The government has said it plans to raise the age at which we are entitled to free prescriptions from 60 to 66, in line with the state pension age. Needless to say many organisations from the Royal College of GPs (RCGP) and the Royal Pharmaceutical Society (RPS), to Age UK have expressed concern. We shall have to see whether the government takes any notice.

Report at <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2021/sep/02/scrapping-free-prescriptions-for-over-60s-could-have-devastating-impact>.

10% of Drugs Dispensed are Pointless

A government review has said that around 10% of all the drugs prescribed by GPs in England are pointless. In an attempt to crack down on this GPs are apparently to be told to boost the use of social prescribing, such as gardening, walking or volunteering (something about which I personally remain deeply sceptical). They are also being urged to call millions of patients in for medication reviews – many of which have been postponed due to the pandemic. While overprescribing is clearly an important issue, and its reduction could save a significant amount of the NHS budget, to me this does rather feel like more political bullying of our overworked GPs.

Report at <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2021/sep/22/government-review-finds-10-of-drugs-dispensed-in-england-are-pointless>.

Drug Interactions

While we're talking about drugs, there's a growing concern about interactions between drugs, and between drugs and patient wishes. That's hardly surprising when over one in six (15%) people in England now take five or more medicines a day, with one in 14 (7%) on eight or more. With each additional drug prescribed the risk of an adverse reaction increases by anything up to 10%.

These adverse reactions are the cause of about one in five hospital admissions in over-65s (and 6.5% of all hospital admissions). So again there is a need to review medications, with a view to reducing inappropriate medication, or switching to better drugs.

This is discussed in detail (albeit heavily USA-orientated) at <https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20210909-the-alarming-risk-of-taking-common-drugs-together> [LONG READ].

Life-Saving Cholesterol Jab

There's a new drug which is thought to significantly reduce cholesterol levels and can be used alongside the ubiquitous statins. Inclisiran is given as an injection every 6 months, and it could soon be available on the NHS following a deal with manufacturer Novartis – despite the lack of evidence of long-term benefit. (This is not obviously a trial, so why are we deploying on an unproven drug?)

BBC report at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-58393866>.

Potential Early Cancer Blood Test

The NHS has launched the world's largest trial of a potentially game-changing blood test. The Galleri test, which is already available in the USA, aims to detect more than 50 types of cancer before symptoms appear. More than 100,000 volunteers aged between 50 and 77 in eight areas across England (but not in NW London) are being sought to provide blood samples. The hope is to reduce the number of cancers detected at a late stage, when there is more likely to be a poor outcome.

Report at <https://www.theguardian.com/science/2021/sep/13/nhs-england-announces-large-scale-trial-of-potential-early-cancer-test>.

Post-Illness Symptoms are Common

We keep hearing about Long Covid (where people have symptoms and reduced wellness for many weeks/months after the infection has apparently been cured). But this effect is not confined to recovery from Covid and is a lot more common than realised. Many diseases, and even injuries, can have quite significant long-term effects – as I know from personal experience of Glandular Fever in my early-30s when some symptoms dragged on for several years.) However the causes of this are not well understood.

More at <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/sep/12/long-covid-post-illness-symptoms-common>.

Folic Acid to Fortify Flour

Folic Acid is an important B vitamin which can guard against spina bifida in unborn babies; it is advised during pregnancy and for those trying to conceive. Following the lead of many other countries the UK is now to require that all flour (wholemeal and gluten-free excepted) is fortified with folic acid along with the current additives of iron, calcium and two other B vitamins, thiamin and niacin.

More at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-58615838>.

Newsletters

And finally, the usual round-up of newsletters received which may be of interest.

- Three issues of the weekly Voice (from 6 and 10 September, and 1 October) are attached.
- NHS In Touch #120 – also attached.

That's all for this month – it was a bit of a marathon! Take care!

Keith

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