

Keith Marshall

From: Barnabas Patient Voices <keith@barnabasvoices.org.uk>
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To: Barnabas Patient Voices
Subject: Barnabas Patient Voices Monthly Update, January
Attachments: BPV_Minutes_20231118.pdf; BB37.pdf; NIHR_PERC_202312.pdf

Email to All [Barnabas Patient Voices](#) Members ...
Printed copies to members without email

A copy will also be posted on our Facebook group, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/barnabas.ppg>, and website, <https://barnabasvoices.org.uk/>.

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.

Happy New Year to Everyone!

Welcome to the January update for [Barnabas Patient Voices](#) members.

Please share healthcare news! (But not anything about your personal care.) Please be brief – just a link to a news item is fine. Email to me at keith@barnabasvoices.org.uk, or leave me a note with reception at the medical centre.

There's generally not lot of healthcare news this month, doubtless in part due to the holidays.

Coronavirus & Winter Disease Update

"Covid is not a cold. With a cold, you don't usually see any long-term effects, you don't see any changes in the blood vessels, you don't usually see an autoimmune disease developing, you also don't usually see neurological inflammation – these are all things that we see with long Covid. Therefore, one should not assume that Covid infection is just a common cold. It can affect brain tissue and the vascular system, and we still lack an effective treatment."
[Karl Lauterbach; Minister of Health, Germany; 4 December 2023]

How refreshing to find a health minister who knows what he's talking about!

At the time of writing there have been no official figures since before Christmas, however reading the country's top epidemiologists and looking at what figures there are it is clear that we are currently in the midst of a big wave of Covid infections, and 'flu infections. This could be the biggest Covid wave since December 2022, and possibly the largest ever. It's all down to JN.1, a new sub-variant of Omicron, which seems to be highly infectious due to some more new mutations, although it doesn't appear to be causing more serious illness. The thinking is that this wave will not peak for another couple of weeks. Meanwhile there is also the annual wave of 'flu infections, which is also high, and again is not expected to peak until later in the month.

Here's Prof. Christina Pagel (University College, London) [just before Christmas](#), and again a [couple of days ago](#). There are other academics following and analysing the data (and reaching the same conclusions), particularly Prof. Sheena Cruikshank, Dr Kit Yates, Bob Hawkins.

So the moral is: wear a mask on public transport, in crowded indoor areas, and healthcare settings; if you have visitors keep your house well ventilated; and try to observe social distancing. All of these will help reduce your risk, of Covid, 'flu and other respiratory infections.

Barnabas Patient Voices News

January Open Meeting – Agenda

This month's Open Meeting is on Wednesday 17 January, 13:00, via Zoom.

The Zoom details are:

Link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/7279594414?pwd=VmYwODdoWGg2eTFvTlVjVlZyRmhSQT09>

Meeting ID: 727 959 4414

Passcode: 149417

The meeting agenda should be:

1. Introductions & Apologies
2. Approve Minutes [attached]
3. Respiratory Conditions (Practice Nurse Karen Collett)
4. Member Feedback
5. Practice Updates
6. PPG Updates
7. Matters Arising, AOB

As you'll see we hope to have Practice Nurse Karen Collett to talk to us about Respiratory Conditions (COPD, asthma, etc.), so please join us if you can.

[As an aside, this meeting is on Zoom as we have still not had any response from the church to requests to book their facilities. We have been unable to identify any alternative and nearby facility.]

Barnabas Practice News

Barnabas Bulletin

The latest issue of the Practice's quarterly newsletter, *Barnabas Bulletin* was available in mid-December. In case you missed it a copy is attached, or can be downloaded from https://barnabasvoices.org.uk/docs/Barnabas_Bulletin.pdf. This link should always take you to the latest issue.

Reception

The good news is that the Practice have recruited an additional Receptionist who started in November. However they still wish to recruit at least one more Receptionist. The Practice are also looking to recruit an additional salaried GP.

General NHS & Healthcare News

GP Records Online

Over 80% of NHS patients (including Barnabas) are now able to view new free-form entries on their GP records online via the NHS App or SystmOnline. (I've used it and it works!) We hope to cover this more

fully in the next issue of *Barnabas Bulletin*. Meanwhile there's more information at <https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/gps/view-your-gp-health-record/>

Remote GP Appointments

NHS data shows that last November 28% of GP practice appointments were conducted remotely (by phone or video). While this is well below the 48% in May 2020, but is still twice the pre-pandemic rate. For many patients, a phone or video call is welcome, as it avoids the need for an inconvenient trip to the GP; meanwhile overstretched GP practices can also benefit from the flexibility. However there have always been concerns that a remote consultation is much less safe than a face-to-face appointment. Although comparison is difficult, researchers have shown that remote consultation is incredibly safe, with under 100 cases highlighted by their analysis out of many millions of consultations. *Guardian* report at <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2023/dec/02/the-doctor-will-call-you-now-are-remote-gp-appointments-safe>.

Mental Health Support for New Mothers

Under new guidance GPs will ask women more than before about how they are feeling at their postnatal health check six to eight weeks after giving birth. Mothers will be asked in detail if pregnancy or giving birth has affected their mental health. This is part of a drive to improve support for women suffering postnatal depression or other mental health problems linked to their pregnancy or childbirth. However it is not clear where the GPs are expected to find the additional time for this. Again there's a *Guardian* report at <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2023/dec/18/gps-to-offer-more-mental-health-support-for-mothers-in-england-after-giving-birth>.

Newsletters

Here's the usual round-up of potentially interesting newsletters received since the last update

- Vaccine Update #344, which is all about maternal vaccinations, is online at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/vaccine-update-issue-344-november-2023-pregnancy-special> (sorry no printed copy due to its size)
 - Imperial PERC Public Involvement Newsletter, December 2023 – attached
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That's all for now. I hope to see you over Zoom of 17th!

Keith

Keith Marshall, Chairman, [Barnabas Patient Voices](http://barnabasvoices.org.uk/)
76 Ennismore Avenue, Greenford, UB6 0JW
Phone: 020 8864 7993 – Mobile: 07847 149 417
Email: keith@barnabasvoices.org.uk or kcm@cix.co.uk
Web: <http://barnabasvoices.org.uk/>

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