

Barnabas Patient Voices

From: Barnabas Patient Voices <keith@barnabasvoices.org.uk>
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Categories: Barnabas Patient Voices

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.

Welcome to the October update for **Barnabas Patient Voices** members. A packed issue this month!

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.

IMPORTANT – YOUR RESPONSE NEEDED

2026 Open Meeting Dates

I'm beginning to think about meeting dates for next year, and would like everyone (yes, that includes you!) to send me a quick response of your preferences.

Please click the link <https://forms.gle/cfixdRw1AoRKSoko7> to complete a very quick six question survey (it should take no more than 3 minutes) which will be open until 31 October.

I will then use the results, along with input from the Practice, to propose Open Meeting dates for next year at the November Open Meeting (see below).

[In November I will be looking for volunteers for next year's "Meet the Patients" sessions.]

Infectious Disease Update

Covid

Not such good news this month, I'm afraid, as Covid levels are continuing to rise and such data as is available indicates that we are now in the range of "moderate" levels of activity. This should not be surprising as (a) activity levels have been rising slowly since a low point in January, and (b) we normally see an autumn peak when everyone is back from holiday, schools are back, and the weather is cooler so we all stay indoors more with our coughs and sneezes.

The current activity is down to the variants XFG and NB.1.8.1 (sometimes known as Stratus and Nimbus, respectively). These two variants are now dominant in UK, although there is no indication they cause more serious illness than other recent variants. However some reports are suggesting there may be tell-tale symptoms with these variants: specifically and a hoarse voice or a "razor blade" sore throat. The previous

advice still holds: if you think you have Covid (or flu etc.) stay home; avoid contact with vulnerable people; and if out, wear a mask. Frequent handwashing may also help.

More background information at <https://bhawkins3.substack.com/p/covid-situation-report-oct-2-2025>, and <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c3rv3y9jnry0>.

Bob Hawkins, who provides much of the public data analysis for Covid, has also had a long, hard look at the prevalence of Long Covid in England. It appears that anything up to 14% of the population currently have, or think they may have, Long Covid. That's a huge burden on the population and the workforce, as well as the healthcare system. Bob Hawkins' report is at <https://bhawkins3.substack.com/p/long-covid-prevalence-in-england>.

Covid & Flu Vaccination

A reminder that the autumn booster Covid vaccinations are now available, although eligibility has been reduced again. Please check the eligibility rules and find booking links at <https://www.nhs.uk/vaccinations/covid-19-vaccine/>. Note that if, like me, you turn 75 before 31 January 2026, you are eligible.

This year's flu jabs are also now available. The Practice are inviting those eligible to come in, or you can go to a participating pharmacy (maybe when you get your Covid jab). Most children will probably be vaccinated at school. The eligibility is different from Covid vaccination; find the rules and booking information at <https://www.nhs.uk/vaccinations/flu-vaccine/>. And here's the obligatory reminder from Ealing Hospital <https://www.ealingtoday.co.uk/default.asp?section=info&page=eanhs110.htm>.

If you are eligible for Covid and/or flu vaccination we would strongly encourage you to take up the offer – it's in your interests, and those of everyone else.

Measles

Just a quick update on the potential seriousness of measles – even years after infection. Apparently a school-age child in USA has died from a rare but always fatal brain disorder that develops years after a measles infection (when they were too young to be vaccinated). This underscores the need for high rates of vaccination as this does reduce transmission and helps protect those who cannot be vaccinated. Report from *Scientific American* at <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/measles-death-shows-how-virus-can-hide-in-the-brain-for-years/> [paywalled].

Barnabas Patient Voices News

September Open Meeting

Apologies once again for having had to cancel our September Open Meeting at short notice. Unfortunately Matt, our Practice Manager, was off work following an accident, so he was unable to open up the medical centre on the Saturday morning – and of course there was no substitute available! Having only just been able to catch up with Matt, I have decided to not reschedule the meeting as any new date will now be too close to the scheduled November meeting (see below).

Open Meeting – 19 November/11

Following on from the above, our next **Open Meeting is on Wednesday 19 November at 13:00 over Zoom**. I know Zoom doesn't suit everyone, but we felt it better to have our two winter meetings on Zoom when the weather is likely to be less friendly. If you can join over Zoom please do; and if you need a hand to get started with Zoom then do ask. The agenda for the November meeting will be in my next monthly update.

2026 Open Meeting Dates

Please respond to the survey request to the top of this update. Your responses will be used to influence next year's Open Meeting dates.

Membership Update

In the last couple of months we've lost two of the regular attendees at our meetings, in both cases because of personal convenience. Losing such members means we are more constrained in what we can do, so this is a plea for those of you who aren't active to get involved and help.

More volunteers = more we can do.

In the coming month or so we will also be asking the Practice to verify our membership list to ensure all who are signed up are still registered with the Practice.

What's Where near Barnabas Update

Also before the end of the year I plan to update *What's Where near Barnabas* – our list of nearby facilities which is designed to help both new and existing patients. You can always find the latest copy at https://barnabasvoices.org.uk/docs/Whats_Where_near_Barnabas.pdf. If anyone has changes, additions or deletions for *What's Where*, please drop me a note.

Barnabas Practice News

Clinical Pharmacist

The Practice's Clinical Pharmacist, Paresh Virji, retired at the end of September. The Practice is currently looking to appoint a new Clinical Pharmacist. Meanwhile Sandip Sodha, our Pharmacy Technician, is holding the fort.

We thank Paresh for his knowledge and care for us over quite a few years, and wish him a long and happy retirement.

Blood Pressure Machine

Great news! The Practice is in the process of installing a Blood Pressure Machine in the waiting area; the machine is for the wellbeing and direct benefit of the Practice's patients. It is hoped that the machine will be commissioned and working by next week. I believe it is has been funded by a donation from the family of a deceased patient. I have not yet seen the machine, but will do so over the coming week and I'll report further in next month's Update.

Local Healthcare News

New Language Translation Service

London North West University Healthcare NHS Trust (LNWH) has launched a new language translation service, across Northwick Park, Ealing, and Central Middlesex Hospitals, to support people who don't speak English. The most commonly requested languages for translation across the hospitals, are Romanian, Gujarati and Arabic. The technology for this initiative has been funded by LNWH Charity, the official charity supporting the trust. Local press report at <https://harrowonline.org/2025/10/06/new-language-translation-service-launched-at-northwick-park-hospital-to-support-people-who-dont-speak-english/>.

Neighbourhood Health Services

The Government has announced the first 43 locations (across the country) which will launch neighbourhood health services. Two of the locations are in NW London: Hillingdon and Bi-borough (ie. Westminster and Kensington & Chelsea). At this stage Ealing is not involved, although this will doubtless change. NW London NHS announcement at <https://www.nwlondonicb.nhs.uk/news/news/nhs-nw-london-joins-rollout-neighbourhood-health-services>.

General NHS & Healthcare News

Paracetamol and Pregnancy

There's been a lot of comment coming from the USA's hierarchy about autism being caused by using paracetamol during pregnancy. However the medical profession have been very, very clear that this is not the case and there is no scientific evidence to support the claims. It is being stressed that taking paracetamol in

pregnancy is safe – indeed it is the safest of all the commonly available painkillers. Anyone wishing to check on this might like to look at:

- NW London NHS notes for healthcare professionals: <https://www.nwlondonicb.nhs.uk/professionals/medicines/medicines/north-west-london-prescriber-news/paracetamol-and-pregnancy-reminder-taking-paracetamol-during-pregnancy-remains-safe>
- UK MHRA news story: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/mhra-confirms-taking-paracetamol-during-pregnancy-remains-safe-and-there-is-no-evidence-it-causes-autism-in-children>
- *Medical News Bulletin* story: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/mhra-confirms-taking-paracetamol-during-pregnancy-remains-safe-and-there-is-no-evidence-it-causes-autism-in-children> (American)
- News feature from scientific journal *Nature*: <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-025-02636-1>

NHS Trust Performance

The league table of NHS Trust Performance has been released. It is divided into three sections: Acute Trusts (basically any hospital with A&E), Non-Acute Trusts (eg. community care), and Ambulance Trusts. So we can now quickly look up how our local trusts are performing relative to the rest of the country.

The NHS report is at <https://www.england.nhs.uk/long-read/nhs-oversight-framework-nhs-trust-performance-league-tables-process-and-results/>, and the BBC has made this somewhat more accessible at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cq8eqxlypv7o>.

New AI Stethoscope

The development of a new stethoscope, which uses artificial intelligence (AI) is well advanced and being tested. Using the new stethoscope, and sending the results to the AI system, three common heart conditions can now be detected in just 15 seconds – something the clinicians ears cannot achieve. There's a report from British Heart Foundation at <https://www.bhf.org.uk/what-we-do/news-from-the-bhf/news-archive/2025/august/ai-stethoscope-can-detect-three-heart-conditions-in-15-seconds>.

Thanks to Phiroze for the alert.

Online GP Appointments

From the beginning of this month GPs are required to make online appointments bookings available for the whole of core hours (08:00 to 18:30). This is causing a lot of contention amongst many GPs with one even saying that inevitably uncontrolled bookings could swamp practices (BBC report at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cgl134edpjjo>). It has also caused the BMA to enter a formal dispute with the government over the changes (report from *Pulse Today* at <https://www.pulsetoday.co.uk/news/2025-26-contract/bma-formally-re-enters-dispute-with-government-over-gp-access-changes/>).

Newsletters

A round-up of potentially interesting newsletters received since the last update.

- **Patients Association** weekly news for 12/09, 19/09, 26/09, and 03/10 – attached as a single PDF (but due to size, no printed copies)
- **PPGukNews** for 06/09, 20/09, and 04/10 – attached

More next month. Meanwhile stay safe.

Keith



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