

Patients' Participation Group - Annual Report for 2020

As we entered January 2020, none of us anticipated the year that lay ahead for us. The NHS was operating, apart from normal winter pressures, in a normal manner. We could as patients ring the GP Practice and make an appointment to come to the surgery to see a doctor. In the wider community we were perhaps still looking forward to holidays and meeting our family. As they say the rest is history, as Covid 19 hit the UK. Our plans were turned upside down and we had to start to think afresh about our normal lives and what we could and could not do.

For the NHS, changes to healthcare provision had to be made urgently. GP Practices had to quickly adapt to provide an effective response and ensure the safety of staff but importantly the ongoing safe provision of healthcare for their patients.

From early March it was apparent that we as a PPG were not going to be able meet monthly as we have always done. At the time the Practice were having to make rapid and essential changes i.e., setting up telephone consultations, video consultations via a secure link and the temporary closure of the branch surgeries at Outwoods and Forest Edge. All of this whilst also planning to ensure a Covid secure environment to see patients face to face when required and for planning for staff including GP's to work if required safely from home.

The Practice were keen to stay engaged with the PPG to share news and updates with us, but also to hear our views, ideas and opinions on the rapid changes that had been introduced. In March we started to send out to members a monthly Newsletter providing Practice updates and information, and as the Chair of the PPG I stayed in contact with the Business Partner, Paul Hanlon, to communicate any feedback from members that was being received.

In May 2020, the PPG moved into the world of technology when we held our first Virtual meeting using Zoom. We have continued to do so for all our scheduled meeting during the year. Out thanks go to the Practice for facilitating this for us. Most of our members have been able to join us on our Zoom meetings, however, a few have not been able to do so. To ensure they can continue to receive updates and communicate their opinions, minutes of all meetings are circulated.

As a group we have valued the opportunity to meet in this way, especially as so much rapid change affecting patients is taking place. The Practice always listen to our feedback and wherever possible make changes where they can be made safely. As a group we have commended the Practice on the speed of change that has taken place under such extreme pressure whilst they continue to look after all our health and wellbeing needs.

On a more positive note, at our meeting in February 2020 we celebrated the anniversary of our 10th year as a group working with the Practice. We celebrated with a cake supplied by the former chairman of the group and one of the original members. Unfortunately, this was the last meeting as a group at which we were able to meet up in person.

As part of our normal meetings, we invite guest speakers to talk to us on issues that relate to health matters. Thanks to Virtual meetings we have been able to continue with this and welcomed during the year the following:

East Midlands Ambulance Service, who spoke about the Covid journey and their new clinical model of service delivery. The Alzheimer's Society spoke about their work and the essential role they play in supporting patients and carers suffering this awful illness. We welcomed the Chief Executive Officer Andy Williams for the Leicester, Leicestershire, and Rutland Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCG). He gave an update on the Covid situation, and how health services across the area are adapting and the pressures that are being felt. At the end of the year one of our members gave a presentation on the U3A Groups across the area. An explanation was given on the type of groups, but essentially the benefits the group can give to people who are lonely and in supporting the wellbeing of people in the community.

During November and December, we welcomed the news of a covid vaccination programme for the UK. Across the Charnwood area all the GP Practices were collectively planning to open a centre for vaccination at the Southfields Council Offices. GP's and staff in the Practice played a major role in the planning and operation of the centre and continue to do so. Members of the PPG have been volunteering in the role of marshals' at the centre since its opening in December.

During the year we said goodbye to some members who had to leave for various reasons. One such person was the former chair of the group John Todd. John gave so much help and support to develop the group over the 10 years it has been in place. John and his wife Jane have moved to Wales to be closer to family. We thank them both for their support and wish them well in their new home.

Looking at the year ahead. Work had commenced on 3 important projects for 2020 these being, the undertaking of a patient's survey to seek your views and opinions on the service provided by the Practice, Dementia support and Bereavement support. Clearly these important projects have had to be held over until a time comes when we not only can meet in person as a group, but also meet with patients within the surgeries to discuss.

As a group we are committed to engage with as many patients in the Practice as we can, to seek your views and to keep you informed on work that we are doing, both to support the Practice and improve your experiences when seeking health care. If you have any comments please get in touch with me through the online form which can be found on the Practice website on the PPG page.

So, we look forward to a new year, a time when we can all safely come out of lockdown and get back to some form of normality. I am sure that the year ahead 2021, will see the Practice and the NHS enter a period of restoration and recovery. With it will come change. As patients some we will look forward to, and some we may perhaps be nervous about. As a PPG along with the excellent relationship we have with the Practice we will continue to act as the critical friend of the Practice. Giving us the opportunity to give feedback, opinion, and suggestions for change.

On behalf of all the group I would like to give thanks to all the staff within the Practice for the support they have once again given to us, and in particular to Paul Hanlon, Practice Business Partner for his continued and valued support during what has been a very busy and challenging year.

If anyone feels that they would like to join the PPG, and through it have a voice in improving where possible the experience patients have when contacting their GP. please get in touch with me through the PPG contact details on the Practice website.
www.charnwoodcommunitymedicalgroup.co.uk

Please can I ask you all to stay safe and remember:

Hands, Face, Space.

Mick Gregory
Chairman Patient Participation Group (February 2021).

