

This Issue

We continue our aim to keep you informed of the services at Ivy Grove and also let you know about the latest medical developments.

Flu season

Flu season is well underway and we therefore give you news on the seasonal and swine flu vaccination programme.

Citizen's Advice

Richard Crowther from Citizen's Advice Bureau writes about Debt Relief Orders aimed at people with low income.

Your feedback

This issue we mention the patient experience survey where you have an opportunity to feedback to us your feelings about the service we provide. Your feedback is important to us – feel free to write to us with your comments or questions. Our address is on the back page of this newsletter. In future issues, we hope to provide a small letters section from patients (anonymised if wished) where we will also aim to answer your queries about surgery services.

Season's greetings

Finally, we would like to wish all our patients a very Merry Christmas and a Happy and Healthy New Year!



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Seasonal and Swine Flu Vaccination Information

As we speak, patients in the at-risk groups are being sent letters inviting them to attend for seasonal flu jabs. We have also taken delivery of our first batch of swine flu jabs and have been immunising those eligible for swine flu jabs when they attend for their seasonal flu jab.

At-risk groups for seasonal flu jabs

1. Those with long-term heart, lung, kidney, liver and neurological (nervous system) disease
2. Diabetics
3. Those with a suppressed immune system
4. Over 65s

At-risk groups for swine flu jabs

1. As groups 1, 2 and 3 above
2. Pregnant women
3. Household contacts of those with suppressed immune systems



Please note the at-risk groups are slightly different. In particular over 65s are not automatically eligible for a swine flu jab merely due to their age – you need to be in a clinical at-risk group to be eligible. In addition pregnancy counts as an at-risk group for the swine flu jab. Your doctor or nurse can let you know if you are eligible or not.

If you have received an invite on the right hand side of your prescription or a letter from us, and you haven't yet booked for a seasonal flu jab, please do so straight away. Places are limited and if we run out, we won't be getting any more. Supplies of swine flu jab are even more limited, so we encourage you to book so that those eligible for swine flu jabs can have this jab at the same time in the clinic. Other groups may subsequently become eligible for the swine flu jab – we will notify you as necessary.

We recommend that all those eligible should have their swine flu jab. If you are unsure about it or have any questions, please pick up a information leaflet from reception. If you are still uncertain, don't hesitate to ring for advice.

Depending on stocks of jabs and numbers of patients remaining to be vaccinated with the swine flu jab, we will be holding some dedicated clinics at other times – please look out for a letter in the post in this situation.

If you believe you are in an eligible group (as described above), and haven't received any notification to attend, please ask at reception.

We will look into your individual situation and get back to you. Note that receiving a flu jab last year does not grant eligibility this year.

Be Active & Feel Healthier with the PCT's Health Referral Scheme

Are you:

- Inactive or not doing much exercise?
- Wishing to do more exercise to improve your health?
- Living with a chronic health condition that would be helped with exercise?



If you have one or more of the following conditions that is stable and controlled then you may benefit from being referred to the Be Active scheme: BMI (body mass index) over 30, High blood pressure, Asthma, Chronic Bronchitis, Diabetes, Heart disease, Mental health problems, Arthritis and joint problems, Osteoporosis, Stroke.

The programme consists of a one to one assessment followed by 20 sessions over a 15 week period with activities in the gym, class activities and chair based exercise. Sessions are held at Alfreton, Belper, Heanor and Ripley Leisure Centre. You have to pay for each session, but these are at a discounted rate.



For more information on the programme, contact the Health Referral Administrator on 01773 525000. Your GP, nurse, physio, mental health worker and other health professionals can also refer you to the service after discussion with you.

Debt Relief Orders

Richard Crowther, Outreach Manager (Amber Valley) writes about an insolvency procedure aimed at people with low income

There's new help for people in debt that offers an alternative to bankruptcy.

If your total debts are less than £15,000 and you're on a low income, you may be able to apply for a new debt remedy called a Debt Relief Order (DRO for short).

You can apply for a DRO if you meet the following criteria:

- You are unable to pay your debts
- You have debts of £15,000
- Your available income after paying normal household expenses, is £50 a month or less
- The gross value of your assets is £300 or less (vehicles worth under £1,000 are ignored when assets are valued) - so you are unlikely to qualify if you are a homeowner
- You are not subject to any other formal insolvency procedure at the time of the application for the debt relief order

- You must not have had a debt relief order within the previous six years.

A DRO usually lasts for one year and during that time none of the people you owe money to will be able to take action against you to get their money back. At the end of the year, you'll be free of all the debts listed in the order.

An Alternative To Bankruptcy

To apply for a DRO, you'll need to contact an authorised adviser, for example a Citizens Advice Bureau adviser, who checks whether you meet the conditions and then applies for the order on your behalf. The order will cost you £90 but you can pay this in instalments over six months.

For more information and advice about other possible ways of dealing with your debt problems, please book an appointment at reception to

see an adviser or visit the Citizens Advice website adviceguide.org.uk

Advice sessions are held for practice patients by appointment at Ivy Grove Surgery every Friday from 9.00am – 12.00pm.

The Citizens Advice service helps people resolve their money, legal and other problems by providing information and advice, and by influencing policymakers.

Advice provided by the Citizens Advice service is free, independent, confidential, and impartial, and available to everyone regardless of race, sex, disability, sexuality or nationality.

CHRISTMAS APPOINTMENTS



In view of the high demand for same day (quick/urgent) appointments at Christmas, we will not be able to offer book ahead appointments from Monday 21st December to Thursday 31st December inclusive.

Please bear with us during this extremely busy time. If you need an appointment we will always try to accommodate you and urgent cases will always be seen.



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NHS

THE GP PATIENT SURVEY

Thank you for taking the time to answer these questions. Please answer the questions below by putting a **X** in ONE BOX for each question. We will keep your answers completely confidential.

If you would prefer to complete the survey online, please go to www.gp-patient.co.uk

Reference/Username:

What is this about?

As some of you may know, the government is surveying patients every quarter with a questionnaire sent directly to homes. Although the questions generally ask about patients' experiences within the surgery, the main focus of the survey has been on access to GP appointments. Unfortunately, across the whole country, it has been recognised that not enough patients have completed the government's very long 8-page questionnaire to gain meaningful results.

Why should it bother me?

Practices are judged on the basis of these results, and we feel that *Ivy Grove Surgery*, along with thousands of other practices around the country, has been unfairly penalised because not enough of our patients answered the questions regarding our appointments.

We depend on the results of the satisfaction survey to enable us to continue to invest in and improve on our services to patients

What can I do to help!

We hope you can help us to address this issue by answering a very quick and short survey the next time you attend for your appointment. The survey asks about the type of appointment you needed and whether you got it or not. Your responses will remain completely confidential.

We will then use the responses we get from you as additional evidence to support our efforts in maintaining patient satisfaction with our services.

Questions and Answers about the National Patient Survey

Q: What is the aim of the survey?

A: The aim of the survey is to assess patient satisfaction with GP services.

Q: Will I get a survey?

A: The Department of Health sends out questionnaires directly to patients completely at random.

Q: Why have not many patients filled it in?

A: The questionnaire has been criticised by many as being far too long – at 8 pages and comprising nearly 50 questions, it asks things like do you trust your doctor and what your sexual orientation is. Because not enough patients fill all questions in, the results obtained may not be statistically valid. This is something to do with confidence intervals for those so technically minded.

Q: Which questions have caused a problem?

A: For our practice, in the most recent quarter, this was the question that asked about 'book ahead' appointments (Question 10). At Ivy Grove Surgery, we have always offered the ability to book up to two weeks ahead and actively keep appointments always available for this purpose. The ability to book ahead is advertised in our practice booklet and on our website.

Q: What should I do if I get sent a survey?

A: You are not obliged to fill one in, but if you do decide to, please try and complete it as fully as possible. In particular, if you can complete the questions regarding our 'fairly quick' and 'book ahead' appointments, hopefully we will get enough responses to give a meaningful **and** positive result for the practice.

POETRY CORNER



The Doctors' Receptionists

No doubt they wonder what's in store,
As we're approaching from the door,
Hoping to see a face we know,
Appear within that square window!

Their greeting then, with ready smile,
Makes us feel better – for a while,
As we then ask, with hopeful voice,
To see the doctor of our choice.

To listen to our aches and fears,
Must nearly drive them all to tears,
On Monday morn, it's sheer mayhem,
You'd think we'd saved our pains till then!

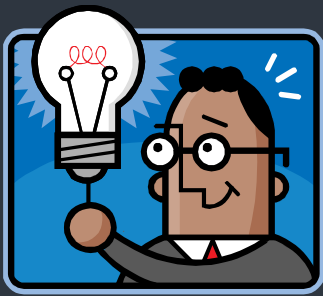
Telephones ringing with scarce a
pause –

An irate caller, without good cause,
To talk to us – and work that screen,
Is not so easy as may seem.

Our gratitude's not always stated,
To show they're most appreciated...

Thank you to Mr Les Worthy for his
kind submission to the newsletter.

Do you have any articles for the
newsletter? Any ideas that you want
to share with other patients
registered at Ivy Grove? If so,
please send them to us at the usual
address on the back page!



IDEAS FOR THE NEWSLETTER

Do you want to see your name in print? OK, maybe you don't, but we would welcome suggestions, ideas and articles for the newsletter – after all, it is a newsletter for you, our patients.

So how about some healthy recipes, good invigorating walks around the area or letters for our forthcoming Question and Answer section? Do you want to inform your fellow patients about some treatment that's been useful or helpful for you?

Write to us here at the surgery.

Housing Applications – requests for letters from GPs

It is not necessary for your doctor to provide a report

Housing and Local Authorities should have workable systems in place to enable them to carry out their statutory duties. This will include the screening and assessment of all housing applications which are said to be based on health grounds.

In accordance with guidance from our Local Medical Committee, GPs are not obliged to provide any medical reports, letters of support or other medical information for housing applications. The Housing Authority and/or its employed medical staff should be able to make a decision based on what you have told them. If they are not able to make a decision due to lack of information, the Housing Authority has the opportunity to request such information from us formally in writing (enclosing a copy of your consent), on payment of a fee. We will be happy to provide such information for the Housing Authority that is relevant to your application. It is certainly not appropriate that they ask you to come and see us for a doctor's letter, the presentation and content of which may or may not influence your application.

This guidance is in line with the Cabinet Office Regulatory Impact Unit work on reducing unnecessary administration and paperwork for GPs and supported by Derbyshire's Local Medical Committee.

Should you have any comments, complaints or compliments about the service you have received from the practice please ask to speak to our practice manager, Mrs Charmagne Stephenson or write to us at the address below.
Contributions and letters to the newsletter are very welcome. Please address correspondence to the address below.
Edited by Dr M. Wong.



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surgery

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DENTAL PROBLEMS

GPs are advised to refer patients presenting with only dental problems onward to a dentist for further treatment.

In cases where you have difficulty seeing a dentist either in hours or out of hours, or are not registered, you should contact NHS Direct on 0845 4647 or ring the dental helpline at Erewash PALS on 0800 783 7279. If you still cannot see a dentist, then attendance at the nearest accident and emergency department is appropriate.

It is not the responsibility of your GP to treat you for dental problems. Your dentist can prescribe a wide range of antibiotics, painkillers and other treatments as appropriate.

Help! I've received a letter to see my doctor!

DON'T PANIC! If you have had some tests done, you may get a letter from us asking you to see your doctor. Please book a routine (non-urgent) appointment with the doctor who has been seeing you for this problem. If you can't get in immediately with your usual doctor, please try not to worry. Your doctor will have already looked at your result and deemed that your condition can be reviewed at their next available appointment. Please try to maintain a degree of continuity by booking your appointment with the doctor whom you have seen previously, even if it may mean a short wait to see them. Any other doctor seeing you will have to spend valuable time trying to catch up on your condition and may even come to entirely different conclusions about what is necessary. This is not always helpful and you may not receive the best possible care.

WHAT IF IT'S SOMETHING SERIOUS?

Please be assured that we will always contact you urgently (often by telephone) should you need to be aware of any results which could be caused by a serious health problem.

Website News

Visit www.ivygrove.org.uk for the latest news at Ivy Grove. Here you will find information on our services, recent news and an electronic version of our practice booklet. You can also request repeat prescriptions online. This newsletter is available online.

NEXT TIME

Next issue we will bring you some news on Dr Jones' retirement and hopefully some information on his replacement.

REMINDER

We will be closed on Christmas Day and Bank Holiday Monday (December 25th and December 28th). Don't forget to hand in your repeat prescriptions slips in good time!

PL. WRITE

Please write to us with your feedback about the newsletter and feel free to submit articles for publication. We want you to get the most from this newsletter and hope it will continue.