

PPG MEETING MINUTES – 2nd May 2024

PRESENT

Dr M Farrelly – Senior Practice Partner
Vernon Morgan – Chair
Nayib Ahmed – Practice Manager
Stela Danaj – Patient Assistant

Shai Davies
Beverley Saunders
Jerome Cotter
Caroline Crowley
Anne Palmer
Jetinder Lali

APOLOGIES

Sally Unwin – Secretary
Daniel Kruger
Kit Chan
Hugh Maloney
Deborah Savage
Angela Abeysinghe
Grenville Bingham

The Chairman opened the meeting by welcoming all those members who had kindly attended but acknowledged that unfortunately, several members had offered unexpected apologies because they had been struck down with illness.

Vernon went on to make an announcement regarding a new development designed with the assistance of Kings College science team under Prof Tim Spector and the Zoe Study group. This latest development is a highly commercial plan targeting the public creating an awareness for how food affects the body. The concept is to market a tailored nutritional health and diet plan. Each will feature a personal programme created under a membership subscription. The idea is that knowledge and education encourage people to make smarter choices for their bodies about the food they eat. Zoe states that by making fundamental changes in diet we can improve gut health, increase energy levels, and improve sleep patterns, thereby improve health and wellbeing. The scheme involves some initial home-testing to profile the individual and tailor an individual plan, (the details of which are online: <https://zoe.com>)

The plan operates via an App on a mobile device, that creates a personal programme that offers personalised food scores, advice from experts on science and nutrition. Depending on your choice of membership level, testing costs from £300-£600 and monthly subscription is between £25-35. It is not cheap at a minimum of £300.00 per year, nor is it new, but for those committed to weight loss or just good health management, it offers structure and connection. It might work well for people who require discipline and a regime to follow. The Zoe experts advocate a largely plant based diet, substituting bad highly processed oils and fats with flax seed oil or extra virgin olive oil. In common with many contemporary authors, it is about education, and training yourself to substitute salt and sugar for healthy alternatives. On the higher levels of membership, patients will receive recipe ideas, and personal exercise and fitness programmes, to supplement your diet leading to a healthy body. The Zoe Health Academy maintains that it has built the world's largest in-depth study of nutrition,

developing data from their initial study of Covid-19. I have no vested interest in Prof Spector and cannot endorse the information because it is a fee-paying business model. There is however, a wealth of knowledge on their website, and if you are worried about what is in highly processed foods then it is certainly worth a look.

For those with less deep pockets, I would suggest that this book, by the renowned America nutritionist will offer excellent information at a fraction of the cost of the Zoe Programme. The trouble is that you will be on your own, without the motivation from the Academy scientists. **Whole Food Cooking Every Day: Transform the Way You Eat with 250 Vegetarian Recipes Free of Gluten, Dairy, and Refined Sugar.** By Amy Chaplin.

https://www.amazon.co.uk/gp/product/1579658024/ref=ppx_yo_dt_b_asin_title_o06_s03?ie=UTF8&psc=1

Minutes.

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 7th March 2024, were passed unchallenged. The Chair made members aware once again that the minutes are now public documents as they are published on the internet, in accordance with a request from NHS England to improve patient access.

Wapping Group Practice Report.

Dr Farrelly reported on the practice staffing levels, confirming that Dr Sheikh Chowdhury was undertaking 4 sessions – two days per week, and that Majreha Shams has now commenced working for the surgery as a Practice Nurse. Dr. Chowdhury started work as a qualified GP in April 2024. He had been a registrar in training at the practice and will be a familiar face to our patients.

We have a change to our reception team with Rasna having left and Zhanade replacing her. Zhanade will undergo a short period of patient protocol and telephone triage training. Dr Farrelly confirmed that the Reception / Patient Assist Team has grown to over 10 members of staff. As a modern healthcare practice, the surgery has almost 40 staff, incorporating salaried GP's, nurses, specialist practitioners, and administration staff. The PPG recognises that managing a business of that size is not without its challenges. Maintaining staff retention, organising training and GP recruitment, during a period when the industry is facing a UK shortage of qualified junior doctors is not easy. It was also noted that Nayib Ahmed as Practice Manager, does an excellent job for our patients when important front-line employees suffer on-the day illness, and he is charged with organising cover.

Telecomms Update/ Patient appointments.

The Chairman mentioned that he is still receiving reports and is experiencing problems with the queueing system to the telecom service installed last year. Nayib acknowledged that there were issues with the menu software, and that he believed these would require the provider's involvement. Vernon will endeavour to publicise that patients need to report the time of the lock-out and the number they are calling from to

a member of reception. Once Nayib has this information he will investigate fully with the provider.

The Chairman reported that GP teams across England, delivered almost 30 million appointments for patients last month (March 2024), up almost a quarter on the same period before the pandemic. NHS Data and NHS Digital produce analysis and figures that are indicative of operational benefits to patients after pressure from ministers. However, the PPG has established that by default because of the way patient appointments are now managed, it is feasible that if a patient requests a call back from a GP, and that discussion develops into a request for the patient to come to the surgery for a face-to-face consultation, it will rightly be recorded as two appointments. Because most appointments now commence with a call back, it was suggested that this could be the premise for NHS Digital publishing positive data suggesting GP appointments are up 25% on the same period in 2020.

Ministers have insisted that GP practices must offer face to face appointments as well as telephone and online consultations, with some patients electing to choose remote appointments where it is clinically appropriate and more convenient for them. Today's data shows almost two-thirds of appointments took place face-to-face (65.4%) in March. The chair acknowledged that Wapping Group Practice has been offering our patients face-to-face appointments for many months but recognises that there is considerable pressure on the release of appointments to the patient booking system on the NHS App because of Econsult, and demand in other areas. The PPG recognises that the system of making appointments is now vastly different from that pre-pandemic, but it does not lessen patient's frustrations when one arm of the NHS machine is encouraging the use of the NHS App as a One-Stop assistant for all our patient needs. This includes repeat prescriptions, receiving test results, and booking appointments. Only for no appointments to be available. Alternatively, patients who believe they can go online after work, by booking an appointment through the practice website will encounter the same frustration. The NHS Wapping Group Practice website functionality routes through the NHS App and shares the patient log-in credentials and therefore they will have no success booking on the website if there are no appointments in the NHS App. Dr Farrelly advised that because of the eConsult system and a larger amount of on the day appointments - there has to be an allocation for this type of appointment and patients may be more successful accessing via eConsult route, which is likely to give them appointment within the next 3 days. Alternatively, calling the practice reception staff as they have access to a live diary of cancellations and a diary that incorporates at least four weeks ahead.

NHS England maintain that almost every GP practice in England has upgraded their phone systems – a key part of the GP Access Recovery Plan. More than 5,800 GP practices use a digital system for answering patients' calls – enabling GP teams to manage multiple calls and helping to end the '8am rush' for appointments. NHS management maintain, this has increased patients' ability to 'get through' to their practice by almost a third. Some patient's experience is less positive. The PPG is wary of the term 'get through' because that does not mean that patients have secured an appointment.

Discussion on complaints raised concerning GP Services.

The Chair was pleased to say that in general there are no serious complaints arising.

Update on personalized care with multidisciplinary teams: GP's at the practice have been working creating an awareness for infant vaccinations, particularly with the rise in measles in S.E. England and London with cases multiplying. Despite a concerted campaign of encouragement by our Gp's, there is considerable disappointment from general practice that parents continue to have grave reservations on infant immunisation programmes following the damage caused by the MMR scandal, and cultural issues surrounding misinformation of bovine or other animal derivatives within the composition of the vaccine that are prohibited under ethnic or religious doctrine.

The Chair reported that the NHS has concerns over Shingles, and the connection with the chicken pox virus, that often lies dormant and can reinfect patients in old age. A new programme was designed in September 23, encouraging those eligible to get the shingles vaccine, which is recommended for all adults over 65 years of age from 1 September 2023, and those adults aged 70 to 79. For certain patients aged 50 and over with a severely weakened immune system the vaccine is also highly recommended due to the possibility of complications and suffering long term neuropathic pain. Anyone eligible should be contacted by their GP surgery to book an appointment for two doses of Shingrix vaccine, 8 weeks to 6 months apart as instructed.

Multidisciplinary services offered through the Practice such as physiotherapy, alcohol & substance abuse, podiatry, and other specialist GP services continue to expand: **The NHS Digital Weight Management Programme** is helping patients referred to the service to lose 8 pounds or more. A [new peer reviewed paper](#), in The Obesity Journal, shows that 63,937 people were referred to the scheme in its first year with 50% taking up the offer and enrolling onto the service. The 12-week online plan offers diet and physical activity advice, as well as guidance and support to help achieve a healthy lifestyle. Access is easy via an App or over the internet.

Of the 31,718 people who started the initiative, including those who did not complete, the average weight loss was still only 2.2kg or 4.85lbs. 30% of the referrals were from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds with the data clearly showing it is helping those from deprived backgrounds, as well as those affected by health inequalities and at a higher risk of adverse outcomes associated with obesity. 57% of were women with an average age of 57 years. Over three quarters (77%) of those referred were aged 40 to 69.

Eligibility - People are eligible for referral on to the 12-week programme if they have a body mass index (BMI) of 30 or more – lowered to 27.5 for people from Black, Asian and minority ethnicities – and are diagnosed with diabetes, hypertension, or both. Eligible people are triaged into 3 intervention levels, with more intensive support targeted at people with higher levels of risk – level 1 provides self-guided digital content and optional participation in group support sessions; the next level offers an additional 50 minutes of 1:1 coaching; and level 3 increases this to 100 mins of 1:1 personal coaching.

NHS Primary Care Action Plan. Patients can currently self-refer for certain key services, such as podiatry, hearing-tests, and physiotherapy; the scheme is to be widened.

This will include increasing access to pharmacy services with access to contraception products, and self-referral for continence services and community nursing. The productivity of GP's is key to ensuring appointment targets are met and it is felt that this can only be achieved by freeing up GP's time to concentrate on patients with more complex needs and by delegating certain requests to highly trained pharmacists.

Although we are told the numbers of GP's is increasing by 50% by 2030, training takes a minimum of 6 years. NHS England is designing new software to improve productivity and reduce GP's administration time. The idea is to simplify processes to reduce time spent on recording patient's medical records, by using templates with multiple-choice, and Ai led software.

From a patient perspective, the chair expressed concern if the NHS Management are holding a metaphoric stopwatch over every GP's patient contact time. If that time is being cut-to-the-bone, such that the patients will suffer. Efficiencies will signpost referrals through the eConsult programme (as was discussed at our last PPG meeting under the Future of General Practice) Meaning that patients are no longer required to see their `GP' because they will be immediately directed to another medical services practitioner. This will eventually erode patient's ability to build a rapport and relationship with a named GP. From a GP perspective, doctors will feel as if they are automatons on a conveyor belt of service, but with no personal engagement and patient relationships developing.

The Practice Website has been redesigned and now offers, the facility for patients to book appointments, (routine appointments 2 weeks in advance) The chair suggested that there is going to be some confusion if people feel they can do everything here but are then signposted back to our PA's on reception. In the same way as the NHS App. Patients are being told to use this NHS App as a routine method of accessing appointments, but the reality is that when he tried earlier that day, he was instructed there were no appointments online, even for two weeks in advance. Repeat Prescriptions can also be booked via the website using your NHS account. For patients seeking Sick (FIT) note administration, the application can also be made through the website. New patients moving into the area can register online using the website, without having to travel to the surgery. Proof of residency can be submitted online.

3. Chairman's Review.

A discussion on Autism and ADHD, with the condition now becoming a major issue for parents, employers, and GP's. The process of attaining sick notes is changing. The chairman suggested that many GP's will welcome the government's decision to reform this area of general practice, as it can become an area of high emotion and tension

between patient and general practitioner. Whilst GP's struggle with quantifying a diagnostic formula for many seeking a diagnosis for autism and ADHD, that role has largely been passed to mental health specialists and charities because the task is just too great, the numbers applying nationally are immense. Currently, UK government ministers are considering involving occupational therapists in work status assessments.

Mental health conditions covering anxiety and depression that previously qualified for welfare benefits are to be reviewed. NHS England is to launch a new attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) taskforce, alongside government to improve care for people living with the condition. The new taskforce will bring together expertise from across a broad range of sectors, including the NHS, education sectors and justice departments including DWP, to better understand the challenges affecting those with ADHD and help provide a joined-up approach in response to concerns around rising demand – with findings published later this year.

The World Health Organisation defines ADHD as being a persistent pattern of inattention and/or hyperactivity-impulsivity that has a direct negative impact on academic, occupational, or social functioning. **Around one in 20 children are now estimated to be impacted by ADHD globally.**

The chairman expressed that in his opinion, this is a more complex area of clinical assessment than politicians are advocating. With the Prime Minister suggesting in recent days that people are trying to get a confirmed diagnosis for autism, ADHD or are using anxiety and depression as an excuse not to take-up gainful employment.

The chairman said that the issues are multi-layered and threaten families in different ways. He went on to discuss gender dysphoria, and the complex issues that these conditions bring. He discussed that there is a social pressure for some young people who feel distress or discomfort from the sex under which they were assigned at birth. Or that they long for sex-related physical characteristics different from those they were born with. Adolescent young people and indeed under 25's, particularly women and gay males and vulnerable individuals are under immense social and peer pressure, to look or behave in a certain way. Much of this pressure comes from social media platforms and may evolve into bullying and intimidation for vulnerable teenagers.

The impacts of lockdown on young people are only beginning to be understood by clinicians. The true impact of interrupted education and the social issues of home schooling and the lack of it, are yet to be realised. Many parents were unable to engage with online classes or had access to the technology necessary to ensure any or all children could participate in online lesson plans. This has led to feelings of inadequacy in both parents and their children. Highlighting that social poverty fuels these parenting difficulties. It is a hugely complex area of social anthropology, and sociologists are a long way from understanding the ramifications.

Over half a million people are on welfare benefits purely with anxiety, depression, stress, or more complex mental health conditions, however transient some of these

may be. They are real for the individual and have been stimulated by social anxiety. Many with low-self-esteem or lacking confidence and self-worth.

Today, almost everyone between the age of 8 and 25 and it could be older in certain areas, will acknowledge that they suffer mental health difficulties, with little or no social stigma attached. By contrast many academics look to a lack in teenage liberty, a change in youthful relationships, discipline in schools, changes in music culture, access to drugs and changes in social prescribing. The chair then made comparisons between generations of young people in the United Kingdom and in America over the past sixty odd years, citing how young adults had shaped history and forged creative influences in fashion. The Rockabilly generations, the era of the Beatles, and counter culturalism and uprisings by the young against government decisions, particularly wars in Vietnam, later the CND marches; social rebellions against Margaret Thatcher's economic policies and closure of the coal mines. Punk movements of the late 70's, and the enormous influences that young adults had on each of those decades. Young people were the driving force that forged public opinion and informed fashion. So, what has happened to extinguish that vitality, temper that aggression and challenge the establishment currently?

PTSD (Post traumatic stress disorder) was almost exclusively an illness that afflicted ex-military having witnessed carnage of the most unimaginable. PTSD impacted victims who suffered horrendous attack by criminal activity, or rape. But no longer, we have children and young people diagnosed with PTSD. New research from UCL & The Sutton Trust, (a leading charity), states in their research that almost half of young people experience mental health problems. With many citing the effects of a decline in mental health leading to psychological distress accelerated greatly by the pandemic.

The research also reveals big differences in mental health by gender identity. Those who identify as female report elevated psychological distress (54%), self-harm (23%) and suicide attempts (11%), compared to those who identify as male (33% report distress, 11% report self-harm and 5% report attempting suicide).

Those who identify as non-binary or identify 'in another way' are more likely to report poor mental health than those who identify as male or female. They were also far more likely to report having experienced bullying.

Covid-19 is identified as a contributing factor to a generation, spanning almost three years of disruption in education and social contact lost. Contributing factors are a combination of social mobility, and economic living standards. A problem exists and it is ruining a generation.

Adolescence is a time of great change for all young people, and this often brings increased vulnerability in relation to their mental health. For young people experiencing additional challenges such as family discord, bullying or identifying as gender non-binary, this vulnerability is significantly heightened. As a society we need to listen carefully to what young women and young men are telling us and think very seriously about how this distress can be reduced and prevented.

3. Information for patients.

Covid Update. More than 700,000 eligible individuals have booked an appointment to get their spring Covid-19 vaccine since the National Booking System opened on Monday 15 April. There are three variants of concern, the most infectious of which has been JN.1 a descendent of Variant B2.86 and a sub-variant of Omicron.

The chair advised that the eligibility age has been raised to 75 and over and anyone resident in a care home. Vaccinations continue to be accessible for those patients with a weakened immune system. The Spring booster programme closes on 30th June 2024. Tower pharmacy, DMB in Watney Market and Chapel Pharmacy in Canon Street Road are all offering walk-in vaccinations without appointments.

COVID-19 is now considered a relatively mild disease for the vast majority of people. This ongoing increase in population immunity permits the development of a more targeted programme aimed at those at higher risk of developing serious COVID-19 disease.

Cancer referrals have doubled.

NHS cancer checks have topped three million in a year for the first time – more than doubling in the last decade. Last week, the NHS exceeded its 28-day faster diagnosis target for the first time, with more than three quarters of people (78%) receiving the all-clear or a definitive diagnosis within four weeks. The increase in patient linked to cancer is therefore, directly proportional to an increase in specialist referrals, patient awareness campaigns, improvement in scanning, productivity efficiencies in Ai and software analysis.

Chemotherapy has also developed tremendously with Targeted therapy. It uses drugs to target specific genes and proteins that normally cause cancer cells to proliferate, survive and grow. Targeted therapy can affect the tissue environment that cancer cells grow within, or it can target cells related to cancer growth, like blood vessel cells.

The chairman announced The NHS has pledged to eliminate cervical cancer by 2040, setting out plans to increase HPV vaccine and increase the screening uptake, to save thousands of lives every year. In addition, there is a new programme to eradicate Hepatitis C in the UK ahead of the World Health ambition target date of 2030.

5. PPG Report from members/ news and developments.

Sally Unwin was unavailable to deliver the community report.

6. AOB:

The seven borough leisure centres are coming under Tower Hamlets Management under the Be Well Programme. All LBTH leisure centres will be closed from 1st - 6th May for upgrades and improvements. This includes swimming, gym and sports facilities currently run by provider – GLL. The contract has expired and not been renewed.

Be Well The Spa, at York Hall Leisure Centre will close from 1st May for renovations.

Sport and physical activity play a significant role in improving the physical and mental health of our community, supporting the economy and reconnecting communities.

Currently, Tower Hamlets recognises a significant number of issues surrounding health in the borough. There are a high number of people living with a long term-conditions and high rates of children and adults living with excess weight and obesity. Around a quarter of the adult population in Tower Hamlets have poor mental health; and levels of physical activity in adults have been falling disproportionately with women, people from certain ethnicities, and older adults being particularly affected.

The new service, [Be Well](#), will provide leisure services to support residents' journeys to a healthier lifestyle. **Click on the link for further details of how to engage, and book to join exercise and dance classes.**

Community Cupboard

A project aimed at supporting families through the cost-of-living crisis by providing free essential items has reached more than 4,000 residents since it launched.

The Community Cupboard was set up last November by Tower Hamlets Council and has been running at all 12 of the Children and Family Centres, providing free essential items like nappies, wipes, body wash and toothpaste to residents struggling to cope with the cost-of-living crisis.

The Community Cupboard was funded by the Government's Household Support Fund.

How to fall asleep faster and sleep better.

The mental health benefits of good sleep include boosting our mood, reducing stress and helping with anxiety. Find out more about ways to help you sleep, including sleep hygiene, and expert video advice from a professor of sleep medicine at the University of Oxford.

Click on the link below on the NHS website- Every Mind Matters and watch informative videos. <https://www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters/mental-wellbeing-tips/how-to-fall-asleep-faster-and-sleep-better/>

The meeting concluded at 19:20 hrs

Diary dates for the next PPG Meetings: Thursday, 4th July & 5th September 2024