MINUTES OF PATIENT PARTICIPATION GROUP (PPG) MEETING HELD WEDNESDAY 31ST JULY 2024 AT 3.00PM

Present

Sue Cousins (Chair), Hilary Mulholland, Pat Morris, David Morgan, Jean Halford, Gail Jukes, Antony Cashmore, John Hipkiss, Dr. Saeed.

Apologies were received from Sam Wilcock (Senior receptionist) Cheryl Burrell, Anke Cooke, Elizabeth Smith. It was reported that Janet Jones will no longer be attending.

Minutes of the last Meeting were agreed as a true record.

Reception role

Dr Harrison passed this item to the group for discussion. It was reported that patients have commented and were concerned due to the questions asked by Reception staff when contacting the Surgery to book appointments. In order to understand the reasons for this we asked if someone from the Reception team could attend the meeting. Due to staff illness on the day this wasn’t possible, however we received a handout prepared by Sam Wilcock, Senior Receptionist showing guidelines the reception team follow when answering calls or at the reception desk. It is to ensure patients are directed to the appropriate service to get the help they need.

Diagram attached showing the possible outcomes/services patients may be directed to. As can be seen there is a wide range of outcomes. The group agreed that this demonstrates clearly why questions are necessary; the challenge will be in disseminating this explanation to all patients. Possible solutions include writing up today’s discussion for display on the website, bullet points for the display screen and for social media. Use of the texting system was also suggested to alert patients to the existence of the website and the information it can provide.

Discussion then included difficulties around the availability of appointments and the frustrations trying to phone for urgent same day appointments only to be told they have all been taken. NB Since the meeting a new telephone system has been put in place with a call back facility; it is hoped this development will be a positive improvement.

This then raised issues regarding confidentiality particularly for patients attending the surgery when asked questions within earshot of other people who may not be comfortable divulging their date of birth or anything of a personal nature in a public place. How can this be resolved? Further discussion offering alternatives in order to address this within the Practice is needed, for example, patients being able to request moving to a quieter area, and appropriate signage to this effect at the desk.

Practice update

Dr. Saeed provided a practice update reporting that demand on the GP services is very high. Nationally the demand for services has greatly increased but the number of GPs available to meet this demand has decreased, with the result that waiting times have increased. This highlights further the importance of reception staff directing patients to the wide range of services which can reduce the demand for GP appointments. The practice is hoping to be able to increase the number of GP sessions to enable more appointments to be made available and cover staff holiday periods/sickness absence etc. Overall Portland Medical Practice is contacting and helping more patients than ever previously. Increasing the number of urgent same day appointments available would mean the wait for routine appointments would be even longer.

Missed appointments

Dr Saeed asked the group for their opinions on how the practice deals with missed appointments. There are a significant number of DNAs (Did not attend) which impacts on availability of appointments for other patients. The practice was considering sending out warning letters to patients following 4 missed appointments; the group felt this could be reduced to action after two DNAs. The practice will continue to use discretion/clinical decisions in relation to failure to attend by patients deemed to be vulnerable. The group felt that the practice would need to decide on the time period to be included; eg two DNAs within 4 months/6 months.

Home visit requests – whenever possible the GP will telephone the patient to ascertain whether this is necessary or whether it can be dealt with differently; home visits take considerably longer than other appointments thus reducing overall availability.

AoB

Following the success of the recent session from Holly Mills from Walsall Society for the Blind it was agreed that future Health Awareness events would continue to be carried out jointly with Northgate Practice and the following suggestions were put forward to be considered : -

Osteoporosis, falls prevention, Parkinson’s, cancer/Macmillan, Sepsis, Shingles. Some of these can also be addressed by contacting relevant agencies for information leaflets for the waiting room.

Patient Survey 2025 requirement: questions to be put forward at the next meeting to enable the Questionnaire document to be produced including collecting data which is more meaningful to the Practice and Patients.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 5.30pm.

Date and time of next meeting to be advised.