

Flu/Covid/News

We started the first of our flu clinics on Saturday 18th which was a great success and another is planned for next weekend. We placed our order a year ago and, despite a 22% uplift in our order from pre-pandemic, we are tight on the over 65 vaccines so we have to impose a brief "hold" on booking any more of this age group but are taking details.

The uptake of flu has been huge and, while the numbers affected are fortunately very small, we are doing what we can to make sure everyone can have a vaccine locally. Plan A is to see if there is excess stock within the PCN and Plan B would be to offer the "under 65" vaccine which is licenced for use in older people but is perhaps less preferable. For the few that are in "holding" please bear with us for a week or two while we try to resolve this or use one of the providing chemists.

The under 65 age group is a bit slower at coming forward and we welcome all those between 50 and 60, or those with a long-term condition to phone up and book in for a vaccine. To incentivise you we may be offering a free sticker or lolly (subject to availability).

The bigger news must be the Covid Boosters. We feel like we are being dangled on a bit of string at the moment and are still not clear on how the boosters can be stored or moved which will have a huge impact on us delivering them. We hope that this will all be resolved by Tuesday 28th.

On 20th September I received an email announcing that the Central Booking Service would be going live from midday. By about 5 past we were already getting calls from people wanting to book in their vaccine booster. Please follow the links you are given and book your booster and get on with it rather than waiting for us - as soon as we can give them we will put out the flags.

I must say I wasn't expecting this Central Booking Service to be up and running so it took me a little by surprise. I think they are contacting people based on the timing of their 2nd jab (ie over 6 months ago) rather than by risk. Phase 1 was very much about eldest and shielding first and it seems that isn't a priority for the booster which goes against the targets we have been asked to work to. I'm sure this will be ironed out this week for our delivery plan. There is consistency that the 12-15 year old jabs will be given by the school vaccination program and not us.

More within our control is news of our growing staff. Eileen, our new Clinical Pharmacist, has started and will help with our medicines management. This is quite topical as the media reported last week that 10% of medication is over-prescribed nationally. This is pretty well-known so I don't really know why they have dragged it up this week but they haven't reported if 10% under-prescribing is a better idea. We have been trying to develop a culture of regular medication reviews and the concept of planning to de-prescribe at the moment of prescribing. As always, we want people to question what they are prescribed and welcome any calls.

We have also celebrated Sarah's arrival to the PCN team. She is a Paramedic Practitioner with huge experience and will be involved in some home visiting for acute illness but also in trying to reduce hospital admissions and provide alternatives to calling for an ambulance.

Sarah's arrival was matched with the departure of our Trainee, Seema Chakravarti, who has completed her training. She was very sad to leave but I am pleased that she has been retained locally and she is now packing her flat in Canary Wharf, moving to Ashford, and will start as a salaried GP in Wye. We wish her all the best and I'm sure will make a positive impact there.

Talk of the Surgery entering a team for the forthcoming Woodchurch 5 mile run has gone very quiet of late. If we do get our act together and you see us then please feel free to offer some encouragement - we will be near the back looking as if we need a Paramedic Practitioner...

Best wishes on behalf of the team at Woodchurch Surgery - Jack Hickey, GP.