

Weekly update from the Surgery

I'm sorry for providing a slightly late weekly update in an attempt to make sense of the events of the week and the weeks to come. As I looked out of the window I was disappointed not to see a carpet of white snow this morning and realised that it was another day of muddy puddles. It was only a forecast though and the weather feels as uncertain as the delivery of vaccines.

On Wednesday we were told that we will have nearly 1200 Pfizer vaccines coming to Charing on the 2nd February which need to be given at Charing surgery within 5 days. The admin team have been busy inviting those over 70 and those shielding and Charing have been trying hard to adapt their surgery into a building that can function as both a safe vaccination hub and still delivering care to their patients. The practice managers are reacting to really last-minute information to deliver this vaccine.

On Thursday I learnt what a "preposition" was in Libby's year 5 English on-line learning (it is amazing how much primary school work I have to google).

On Friday I learnt that there is a national target to have offered vaccines and administered them to everyone over 70 and those shielding by the 14th February. The rate-limiting step is reliable stock of vaccine but with this target we can hopefully negotiate to get better supplies.

Vaccination hubs:

Having been told that the vaccination program will be GP-led patients are now receiving letters inviting them to vaccination hubs, such as in Folkestone. The admin team have been fielding calls from patients having to decide whether or not to take up the invite. This is a new tactic to try and reduce inequality as some areas have been slower to start vaccinating.

These are genuine invites although I understand that there may be unscrupulous people out there trying to defraud by getting your personal information. The invites might require you to enter some personal information to make the booking but nothing more than is already on the invitation. There will be no need to enter any passport numbers/driving licence details or bank details.

Because we are reacting from one week to the next we cannot book in patients until we know we have the vaccine and then we will call you. By all means book at a vaccination hub and please email us to tell us so we do not invite you to the surgery as well – kmccg.woodchurchsurgery@nhs.net. The only time frame I can give is that we aim to have vaccinated all those over 70 years of age and clinically extremely vulnerable (shielding) by 14th February. We then can move on to cohort 5.

Reminder about the cohorts:

- 1 Residents in a care home for older adults and their carers
- 2 All those over 80 and frontline health and social care workers

- 3 All those over 75
- 4 All those over 70 and clinically extremely vulnerable (shielding)
- 5 All those over 65
- 6 All those between 16 and 65 with underlying health conditions (ie those who would be offered the flu jab)
- 7 All those over 60
- 8 All those over 55
- 9 All those over 50

It is easy to get caught up with the vaccination program and when I have spoken to a few patients they have apologised for “causing a fuss” when we “must be so busy”. I am very grateful for their considerate comments, however, we do remain open for primary care (GP and nursing stuff). Please do not put off contacting us if you are concerned or are unwell and please don't stop monitoring long term conditions like diabetes and heart disease. If you are taking medication it is important to monitor it as usual to prevent unwanted complications.

Routine appointments at the hospital and new routine referrals have been suspended for the time being but all urgent referrals (such as suspected cancer) are going ahead as usual so please be responsive to new symptoms that may need investigation.

Every vaccine given is a step closer to recovery of our freedom and the economy but please remember to get your flu jabs (we are a bit low on the under 65s with long term conditions), and report new symptoms of concern to us. We look forward to seeing you all and there is no such thing as “a fuss”.

Best wishes on behalf of the Surgery

Jack Hickey - GP