Reflections on General Practice February 2023

2023 marks 75 years of the National Health Service, the first universal health system to be available to all, free of charge at the point of delivery. Whilst those principles remain as relevant, and valued, today, as they did in 1948, the NHS is not the same now. The NHS has innovated and adapted to meet the needs of each successive generation, over the years, always putting patients at the heart of everything it does. However, the NHS is struggling, and needs to look at new ways of providing care to help it survive in the coming years.

1st February 2023 marks my 30th Anniversary of working in General Practice. I joined the Heyward Road Surgery in Southsea as a GP Trainee (now known as Registrar), and then became a partner at Waverley Road Surgery in 1995, merging with Salisbury Road Surgery in 2015 to form Craneswater Group Practice.

General Practice, and the care it provides its local community is also very different now, and like all areas of the NHS is struggling to keep up with demand, and to provide the care our patients deserve.

30 years ago, most local practices offered GP appointments of 5 or 7.5 minutes, in 2 hour long surgeries twice a day, plus a handful of urgent on the day extras. Computers were just appearing on consulting room desktops, notes and prescriptions were mostly handwritten, all test results and hospital correspondence reached us by post, and any recalls were done manually from a list in a filing box.

We did not have mobile phones or the internet, and the only tablets we saw were medication, usually in bottles then, not blister packs. Those days are gone. The job I did in 1993 is virtually unrecognisable now compared to what we do now, other than having a cohort of patients to support, and the privileged insight we gain into people’s lives. It is far more complex in almost every way.

The NHS has partly been a victim of its own success with an exponential growth in new treatments, screening, health promotion, chronic disease management, with people now living longer and with multiple health conditions, complex medication regimes, and frailty.

There are no longer enough GPs to go round. Going forward there is far too much primary care work for GPs to manage, with fewer GPs working now, on average working less hours, though working far harder in those hours, and with little prospect of an increase in numbers in the foreseeable future. So, other health professionals are now starting to take on some of that work.

We are very fortunate to be fully staffed in Craneswater Group Practice at present, with 2 new GP partners joining in the past year, but we are unable to just take on yet more additional staff, even if we could find some, as we have limited funding and need to remain financially viable. We do our best to cover when staff are unwell, but with increasing absence now with illnesses like Covid, this can sometimes leave us having to cancel appointments at short notice.

2 other practices in Portsmouth have closed in the past 2 years; we are working hard to ensure we remain open.

The demand for our appointments has also increased hugely since before Covid. More people wanting to be seen for an ever-increasing variety of issues, many very complex. The need for telephone triage of all calls during the covid pandemic, has put huge pressure on phone systems so we have upgraded, and have more lines in to the surgery. We do understand how hard it can be to get through on the phone; I personally have been number 30 in the queue to my own surgery trying to book an appointment, so we do know what is like everywhere. We have plans to open up more face-to-face appointments which should help. But we simply cannot offer face to face appointments for everyone who wants one, as there is not enough room in our surgeries to accommodate that, nor enough clinicians to see them all. Thus, we have to prioritise, and look at alternative ways of managing.

Thank you for reading this far. We want to acknowledge that the NHS is under pressure, and that we, like most GP surgeries are struggling with capacity. There is too much work, traditionally done by GPs, for those in place to manage.

The NHS expectation is that some of our GP workload will be taken over by other groups of health professionals. You may well have met Donna and Laura, our Nurse Practitioners, who assess, manage patients, and prescribe, for a variety of health conditions. On the next page there will be examples of our other clinical staff, and some developments which should be helpful.

Our reception team are trained in care navigation, so if they suggest you have an appointment with someone other than a GP, that is likely to be a good place to start. They have an important role in helping us to manage patient expectations and demand, and they are following advice they have been given by the GPs. We do understand how frustrating it can be when you cannot get an appointment with the person you want or at the time you want, but we all have limited capacity. You could also consider self help, there are links on our website for many minor illnesses, and local Pharmacies are able to advise on a wide variety of problems. Please don’t waste appointments. It still amazes me how many people do not turn up for booked appointments without cancelling, or don’t answer their phone for a telephone appointment. Other people could have those slots.

The whole team at Craneswater Group Practice is dedicated to supporting you with your healthcare, however often you make contact. Each and every one of our staff does a fantastic job, sometimes in very challenging conditions. We have an amazing group of people working in our team, please help them to help you by remaining courteous, and calm. It’s always good to hear if things are going well, so let them know if you think they are doing a good job.

With all good wishes for a healthy 2023.

Richard Foord, GP

All of our Clinical Staff work across both surgery sites, Waverley Road, and Salisbury Road.

Staff Of CGP

GP Partners:

Dr Richard Foord

Dr Richard Garland

Dr Amy Dunford

Dr Aroline Rodrigues

Dr David Ashby

Dr Linda Sheers

Salaried GPs:

Dr Sarah Reid

Dr Davia Muir

Nurse Practitioners:

Donna Posgate

Laura Hughes

Pema Brown (from March 2023)

Practice Nurses:

Gwen Bruce

Paige Wood

Heath Care Assistants:

Mandie Moody

Lisa Van Herck

Nicole Hewett

Business Manager:

Julia Robinson

Operations Manager:

Lisa Hewett

HR Manager:

Karen Moore

Reception Lead:

Julie Gough

Admin Lead:

Kyra Beever

You may be offered appointments to see any of them at either site.

Our Practice Nurses work in our treatment rooms, but also visit some housebound patients and care home residents for immunisations and helping with chronic disease management.

They carry out a wide variety of vital duties including taking cervical smears and other screening, assessing wounds and applying dressings, immunisations, managing chronic diseases. We are currently looking for a new nurse to join our team.

Our fabulous frontline reception team and awesome admin staff behind the scenes, are all working tirelessly to allow us to do our jobs & provide the best care we can for all our patients.

If they suggest someone other than a GP for your appointment, that is probably a good place to start. There are links to a variety of self-referral options through our recently updated website. These include for physiotherapy and talking therapies/counselling.

Video consultations may be available for certain problems, with qualified GPs who work outside of this surgery.

If you are offered a telephone appointment, particularly on the same day, please answer. We try to be as close to appt time as possible, but can be delayed. It is really frustrating when the phone isn’t answered the first time. Also please try to be somewhere quiet without lots of background noise so that we can hear you.

Our Pharmacy Team, led by Pharmacist, Radia, are shared with Trafalgar Medical Group Practice, linked to our Primary Care Network. They can deal with most prescription issues. They liaise with local community pharmacies and patients, update medications lists, and help with general medicines management.

Also linked to our Primary Care Network are our Social Prescriber, Kate, and our Health & Wellbeing Coach, Katie. They can support and help patients particularly with non-medical issues, lifestyle support and advice, signposting to community projects, advisory services and charitable organisations.

Physiotherapists now offer same day triage appointments available for any musculoskeletal problems. Phone reception early morning to book. There remains a self-referral pathway for community physiotherapy services for those with an ongoing need.

In house physio appointments are also available when appropriate.

If you want to send photo, it’s easiest to send e consult using the link on our website, giving background info. This could be of rash, mole or other concern.

Our Healthcare Assistants (HCAs) also work in our treatment rooms, supporting our nursing team, with roles including dressings, ECGs, BP, NHS & other checks, dressings and injections. They may have given you your flu jab !

Our Nurse Practitioners are fully trained and have the experience to triage, manage, and prescribe for patients with a wide range of conditions. They also run specialist appointments for conditions such as Diabetes & High blood pressure.

A third NP is due to join the team in March 2023

Emailed communication remains hard for us to process, takes time, and may lead to delays. We request no clinical information or requests are made by email. It is better, and safer, and really helps us if such a request can be sent from an e consult using the link on our website.

Website [www.craneswatergp.nhs.uk](http://www.craneswatergp.nhs.uk) CRANESWATER GROUP PRACTICE FEBRUARY 2023