

## MAY 2020 NEWSLETTER

We would like to say a huge thank you for the way in which you have embraced all the changes in general practice over the last few weeks and in helping us to make the best of a very difficult situation. The uptake of telephone consultations, e-consultations, video consultations and the increased use of the website to contact the practice has enabled us to reduce face-to-face consultations dramatically – thus reducing the risk to staff, to other patients and to the population as a whole.

### On-Line Access

As a result of all the changes, we have seen a huge surge in the numbers applying for on-line access. We usually ask you to come with a form of photo ID and proof of address to validate such requests but are currently unable to do so. We are working through the hundreds who have applied and are verifying ID using personal email address, but this is taking time. Your patience is appreciated.

AccuRx, the SMS messaging platform we use for SMS messages, has developed very rapidly and we can now add sick notes, receive digital photographs, send out COVID-19 screening questions and also has the facility for some chronic disease monitoring. IT IS VITAL WE HAVE CURRENT CONTACT DETAILS FOR EVERY PATIENT (email and mobile).

The CCG has been working very hard with daily updates for practices – at the start of the pandemic the advice seemed to change almost daily but I think we have reached a plateau now. Getting enough PPE is an on-going issue and we are extremely grateful to St.Helens Rota for providing some visors. We could sand wood with the backs of our hands due to the extensive washing.

### Advanced Care Planning

We have been asked to contact patients at the highest risk of severe COVID-19 and to ask them to consider Advanced Care Planning, but it applies to all of us. If you know already that you would prefer to stay at home we can document this and look after you at home. If we think you would benefit from hospital care, we will say so. We want what is best for you. If time is short, what would you want? Please think about it. Be assured that we treat every patient as an individual and your wishes will be followed wherever possible.

I think this is an impossible question to ask of people (unless you have very definite ideas against being admitted to hospital) as I don't think many of us will know unless it happens how we will feel. Any decisions made can be changed at any time.

On a lighter note, you should see us trying to join virtual meetings with colleagues! We are rubbish at Skype, slight better on Zoom and in urgent need of technology lessons 😊 😊

### Mental Health Resources

This is a difficult time for us all and additional mental health support is available.

Crisis line: 01925 275 309

St.Helens Well-being support line: 01744 371 111

StHelensWellbeing.org.uk gives advice on exercise, stopping smoking, weight management, mental health and so much more. Please visit website or contact them on [chcp.sthelens@nhs.net](mailto:chcp.sthelens@nhs.net).

Please don't ignore important symptoms for fear of COVID. We are here to help you.

Please keep safe. Please be patient regarding social distancing.