

Produced by
the Patient
Liaison Group

***NEWS* from Downing Street**

It's easy to avoid a queue on the phone

WHAT is the best time to telephone the surgery? Well, almost any time except first thing on a Monday morning. That's when everyone who has been feeling unwell over the weekend picks up the phone. Unless it is a real emergency it is best to wait a little while, giving the receptionists time to deal with that first rush of calls.

You can avoid a telephone queue by using the automated service for making or changing appointments, either on the phone or on the Internet. You can also order repeat prescriptions online. To ask about test results, call in the afternoon.

There is no need to register for the automated telephone system. Dial the surgery number, **08444 125 888**. You will be asked to press 2, then to key in your date of birth – for example, for 4th of August 1972 you would enter 04 08 72, then enter your telephone number followed by the * key. You can then follow the spoken instructions to make or change an appointment.

Signing up to use the Internet booking system (which also enables you to ask for repeat prescriptions) requires a preliminary visit to the surgery, bringing along some identification with a photograph, such as driving licence or passport. *The telephone and Internet booking systems are available 24 hours a day, every day of the year.*

John's 31 happy years in the practice

Dr John Steed, a senior partner, is retiring from the practice on April 2. He has been here for 31 years and says "I have been very fortunate to be at Downing Street -- leaving will be a wrench."

Qualifying at the Middlesex Hospital in 1974, he went on to do the vocational training course in Brighton and to achieve the Diploma of Child Health and the Diploma of Obstetrics and Gynaecology.

He came to Downing Street in 1980 and in the same year became a member of the Royal College of General Practitioners. His special interest is diabetes.

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VOLUNTEERS WANTED --- See overleaf

Liaison Group looking for new members

THE Patient Liaison Group, which exists to provide a forum for patients and health professionals to talk to each other about how the Downing Street Practice is run, is looking for new members.

Any patient is welcome to apply – to see from the inside how the surgery works, to discuss mutual problems and concerns in a friendly atmosphere, and help to keep up the high standards to which the practice always aspires.

Meetings are usually held quarterly, in the early evening, starting at about 6.15, and usually last about an hour or an hour-and-a-half.

They are attended by one or more of the doctors, the practice manager, and representatives of the nurses, receptionists, and so on.

Patients' representatives get an inside view on how the surgery works, the day-to-day problems, changes which are on the horizon for the NHS etc, and can put forward their own views and ideas for improvements.

They have prompted improvements such as Saturday morning opening, the introduction of higher seats in the waiting areas, preferred by many older patients, and other changes to make visiting the surgery easier.

Says the group's chairman, patients' representative Ian MacDonald: "We put forward the patients' perspective on how the practice works – what it is doing well and how it can be improved. With huge changes about to be introduced into the NHS, this is an exciting time to join the Liaison Group."

Interested? Write to the practice manager.

THE HEALTH SERVICE IS FACING ITS BIGGEST CHANGE

THE biggest change in the NHS for many years is getting under way. It involves the abolition of primary care trusts, such as Surrey PCT, in 2013 and their responsibility for budgeting and administration being passed to new bodies run by local general practitioners.

The effect will be to put GPs, working together in groups, in charge of budgeting for, and commissioning, local health services.

As part of the preparations for the change, the GP practices in Farnham have formed a consortium. As well as the Downing Street Group Practice it includes Farnham Dene Medical Centre, Ferns Medical Centre, the Holly Tree Surgery and Dr O'Donnell and Partners. The practices serve a population of around 44,000.

It is not yet known whether this will be considered big enough to act independently or whether Farnham might be linked to an adjacent area.

The new manager

LESLEY BARTON is the new practice manager, succeeding Gary Beard who moved to an NHS post in Lambeth.

Lesley has wide experience in practice management. She came to Downing Street last August and says she is still on a steep learning curve – but enjoying it!

STAIRS? *No problem*

SOME of Downing Street's doctors are now located upstairs at the surgery. And some patients find this a daunting – if not impossible – situation.

However, there is no need to worry. If you have to make an appointment and fear that it might involve those stairs, speak to a receptionist so that arrangements can be made for you to be seen at ground level!