

YOUR VOICE, YOUR NEWS

Patients' Participation Group for the Sid Valley Practice

In this issue:

- A note from the Chair
- Pharmacy First
- Self Help event
- 7 ways to cut down cancer

A note from the Chair



Welcome to our latest newsletter as we head into a new year. We were delighted to see many of you at our first "Self Help" event in November—see page 2 for some of the fun things that we staged. We are continuing our theme of how you can help yourself in this issue, looking at how we can work to manage our

own risks of serious disease (page 3). The GP Practice continues to be very busy and we know it can be frustrating having to wait for an appointment—I've put a reminder below of the NHS initiative "[Pharmacy First](#)". Our local qualified pharmacists can be your first port of call and even potentially avoid having to visit a doctor at all.



"We support the PPG's focus on self care—

many visits to the surgery could be avoided by using Pharmacies and taking care of ourselves. Obviously the clinical staff are here and ready to help when needed."

Joe Stych

Practice Partner

where you see a [blue](#) word, you can click for more information.

All views expressed are those of the author or the Patient Participation Group, not the NHS or Clinical Commissioning Group.

Most pharmacies can help you with **seven common conditions** without needing a GP appointment

Speak to your pharmacist if you suspect you have:

- **Sinusitis**
(adults and children aged 12 years and over)
- **Sore throat**
(adults and children aged 5 years and over)
- **Earache**
(children aged 1 year to 17 years)
- **Infected insect bite**
(adults and children aged 1 year and over)
- **Impetigo**
(adults and children aged 1 year and over)
- **Shingles**
(adults aged 18 years and over)
- **Urinary tract infection**
(women, aged 16 to 64 years)

NHS
Providing NHS services



**Visit your
Pharmacy First!**

DNA EXPLAINED

MAKE SURE YOU AREN'T THE 1 IN 7

Do you know what the letters DNA stand for? The scientifically-minded immediately think of **deoxyribonucleic acid** – the building block of life. But for the NHS, the letters DNA stand for "**Did Not Attend**" and refer to those patients who fail to turn up for their medical appointments.

Recent estimates suggest that more than 15 million medical appointments are missed annually in England with half of these missed appointments with GPs, costing the NHS in England over £200 million per year. Each missed GP appointment costs the NHS, on average, £30 per person.

Nationally, about 1 in 7 GP appointments are missed, with reasons given that include work or family commitments, forgetting the appointment, difficulty with transport, feeling too ill to attend, the weather, or simply felt better. The high volume of missed appointments increases demand on GPs and other clinicians by taking up, but not using, appointment slots that another patient could have used.

So, if you know you won't be attending your appointment, please try to cancel as far in advance as possible either by 'phone or online if you are registered for online services – or just pop into reception at either the Beacon or Sidmouth Hospital.



PPG Self Care Event

Activity and information morning, 2 November 2024



volunteers offering leaflets and advice.

The main message was that regular exercise, getting outside and appreciating nature, eating sensibly (lots of healthy snacks were on offer!) and socialising are key to good physical and mental health. We promoted volunteering opportunities in Sidmouth, since helping



others is also important. Ear checks and hearing information were available, chair exercise demonstrations arranged, and a pharmacist was able to explain which services they can offer to save waiting to see a GP. Two choirs (Sid Vale folk choir and Sidmouth community choir) entertained us, reminding everyone that singing is good for one's health – and they made it an enjoyable event.

The NHS is often criticised for focussing on cure rather than prevention, and we hope this was a step in the right direction. The [NHS website](#) is full of useful self-care advice as is the [Sid Valley Practice website](#) - which also guides patients to the right person/service to consult.





Despite big improvements in cancer detection and treatment over the last 50 years, cancer is still a disease feared by most people. It is perhaps not surprising since 1 in 2 people in the UK will be diagnosed with some form of cancer during their lifetime, although only 1 in 3 will die of it.

Often when people are told that they have cancer, one of the first questions they ask is “why me - and is there anything I could have done to prevent it?”. We now know that at least 4 out of every 10 cancers are preventable, with inherited genetic factors accounting for at most 1 in 10 cancers. So, what can we do to reduce our risk?

A third of all cancers are in people aged 75 and over, but making healthy changes can reduce your risk whatever your age.

Why does cancer risk increase with age? Over time, the cells in our body become damaged and although our bodies are programmed to repair this damage, and some

damaged cells self-destruct, as we age this process gets less efficient. If the damage builds up and the cells are no longer subject to the normal control mechanisms, the cells start to divide and multiply spontaneously – and that is cancer.

Cell damage is also caused by things outside the body, such as the chemicals in cigarette smoke, alcohol and too much UV radiation from the sun. We are increasingly recognising the importance of a good diet and weight control, and obesity is a risk factor for many cancers – even those remote from the bowel.

Screening is offered nationally for a few cancers such as bowel, breast and cervix where early intervention has been demonstrated to save lives, so making sure we take screening opportunities is important. Similarly, the immunisation of young teenagers against HPV should dramatically reduce the incidence of cervical cancer.

You may wonder why there is no national screening programme for prostate cancer in the UK given that 1 in 6 men in the UK will get this cancer at some point in their lives. This is because the PSA blood test isn't a reliable test that can pick up prostate cancer that needs treatment at an early stage, so finding a raised level could lead to many men having unnecessary treatment.