

REPORT ON THE FOURTH YEAR OF DELIVERY OF A PATIENT PARTICIPATION GROUP

20th March 2015

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Introduction

The Grove Medical Group conducted its annual general meeting at the start of the year. The AGM was divided into two phases, one of which dealt with a review of progress to date, confirmation of membership and election of the chair. The second part of the meeting was given over to a presentation by Dr Matthew Beattie, the clinical lead for Accident and Emergency, who presented to membership on the NHS 111 system.

During this year CQC Inspectors visited the Practice and the PPG membership were invited into the Practice to hold discussions with the Inspectorate. The results of this inspection will be published once they are known.

Agreement on Action Plan

The PPG agreed an action plan with the Practice covering three significant areas:

1. Improving telephone access to the practice.
2. Improving patient participation group representation across the Practice.
3. Improving membership awareness of clinical priorities in the Practice.

The overarching aim of the Patient Participation Group (PPG) remains to obtain the views of patients and carer's of the services we offer at the Practice and to give patients a forum to explore ideas and opportunities to improve those services.

Improving telephone access to the Practice

There remains a problem with the waiting times experienced by some patients when telephoning the Practice. These vary, depending on the time of day, but weekly telephone surveys suggest they can be anything from 20 seconds to 11 minutes and longer at peak times. A clear area of priority from the PPG has been to attempt to ameliorate this situation by improving ways in which patients can contact the Practice. Where the preferred choice is by telephone, then the Practice looked at how access and response time could be improved.

The Practice has reviewed the cost of providing an improved telephone service in order to offer patients an indication of where they are in the queue – however, the estimated cost for this was over £12,000. The Practice felt this was unsustainable in the current climate. An alternative approach was to provide more manpower on the desk at critical times, particularly on a Monday morning and immediately following a Public Holiday. Recruiting initiatives and an attempt to tackle an increased staff sickness level were intended to ameliorate this situation. In addition, the Practice took the initiative of changing the way it delivered test results, encouraging patients not to phone the Practice (and therefore cause increased telephone traffic) to get results which were often normal. Instead the Practice would contact patients if there were any concerns around test results and invite patients back in for a review. The introduction of a new software system (System 1) to the Practice was also felt to be very successful with many patients commenting on the ease of use and the reduction in the number of telephone calls required. The use of ONLINE booking was also encouraged by the Group.

In conclusion, the Practice feel it has done all it can at the moment to improve patient access by phone. It is looking to review the service requirement and plans are in place to visit similarly sized practices in order to review their telephone service and see whether it is time to replace the current service. The results of this review will be published in the Practice newsletter.

Increasing Patient Awareness

The PPG elected to focus on raising patient awareness of the PPG by attempting to reach a wider group of patients through a number of means. These included patient surveys (which were randomly distributed to over 500 patients during the reporting year in the Practice) and letter drops. Recent changes to the way in which the Reception area had been remodeled were included in information sent to patients contained within routine letters and invitations to attend the flu clinics and it was felt that these means would assist in raising and maintaining awareness of the importance of Patient participation in the delivery of primary care services.

The actions taken to address this priority included patient surveys distributed in January 2015 and advertising flyers sent out with routine letters for a month and all flu letters (reaching approximately 3000+ patients). A news board, specifically devoted to the work of the PPG, had been placed in the Reception waiting area. Information on the PPG had been published in the Practice newsletter and on the Practice website. Agreement had been reached between the PPG and the Practice that members of the PPG will attend the Reception area at certain times, both to bring attention to the PPG and to seek patient's perceptions of the Practice.

The result of these initiatives have been consistent and regular attendance at PPG meetings; there is "buy in" to the concept and an increased willingness for members to become active in helping the PPG to achieve its aims and be an inclusive partner in the delivery of health care across the Practice. A greater understanding of the Health economy and some of the decisions which are required to be met in order to deliver the most comprehensive service in the Practice. The membership have been apprised of the ongoing costs of in hours irregular attendance at A&E by registered patients and is actively seeking ways to publicise this and encourage patients to use their GP serve as a primary means of gaining access to health care.

Improving membership awareness of clinical priorities

The PPG elected to look at ways of improving membership awareness of clinical priorities within the Practice (which had been derived from work undertaken by the CCG PPG). The specific rationale behind this was to look at ways to signpost patient access which did not necessarily require face to face consultation with a clinician.

The Practice purchased a BP/BMI/weight recording machine in order to promote increased awareness of clinical indicators which did not necessitate a visit to either a GP or a Nurse. The machine was specifically signed from the waiting room. It has been agreed with the PPG that when its members are present in the Practice they will signpost patients to this service and encourage use during campaigns (such as the Practice flu campaign). Reception staff were also encouraged to make patients aware. The priority was published on the Practice website and in the newsletter.

The result of this is that there has been some improvement in uptake for this service and it is anticipated that this will be further improved once the PPG presence increases.

Survey of Patients

The practice conducted a patient survey asking over 500 patients to complete a questionnaire in order to ensure that there was appropriate representation and that the voice and opinion of those using the services was being heard. The questions were based around contact, consultation, understanding of the new health and social care bill and areas in which they practice may need to make improvements.

The results of the survey will be shared with the group at the forthcoming AGM in April 2015.

CONCLUSION

The Practice survey will shortly be published on the Practice website, as well as Minutes of the PPG meetings.

The Practice will continue to engage with the PPG and look at ways in which communication can be improved. Membership of the PPG has increased and there appears to be a good momentum for continuing improvements.

The most tangible way in which the PPG has effected change can be seen in the new reception area – which has demonstrated that the Practice is listening to its patients views and responding to them.

If you would like to join the PPG please contact the Chair person John Smith on johna.smith@dsl.pipex.com . If you have any further questions about the PPG and would like to address these directly to the practice please contact the Practice Manager, or in his absence the Admin Lead Claire Atkinson.

CJ TOWNEND RRC

Manager

The Grove Medical Group