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Telephone Consultations at The Manor Surgery

During the COVID-19 pandemic The Manor Surgery switched to a telephone triage system whereby patients were offered a telephone consultation with a GP in the first instance to assess their condition and decide whether they required a face-to-face consultation or could safely be dealt with remotely.

This system has proven very safe and effective and has greatly enhanced our patient access and therefore, we are going to continue with it going forward.

Benefits of the telephone triage system are as follows:

- **Better patient access:** Our experience is that over 50% of calls can safely be dealt with remotely. This frees up more GP appointments. The Manor Surgery has some of the best access figures in the country with most patients being offered an appointment within 5 days for non-urgent conditions, compared to a wait of up to 4 weeks nationally. Any urgent or emergency consultation requests are dealt with on the same day by the on-call doctor.
- **Longer consultations:** GPs are able to spend more time with patients who have complex needs such as cancer & palliative care patients; patients with multiple chronic diseases and frail elderly patients.
- **Greater flexibility:** If following a phone consultation, it is decided that the patient needs to be seen in person there is greater flexibility in offering an appointment time that suits them rather than having rigid appointment times. This is helpful if patients are arranging appointment around work or school etc. It also means they generally avoid long waits in the waiting room.
- **Patient satisfaction:** The vast majority of patients are very satisfied with the current system as it ensures that they get an appointment quickly and have their problems dealt with efficiently. If a face-to-face consultation is required, they are usually seen that day, often within the hour.
- **Patient safety:** In the past many patients made routine appointments with potentially life-threatening symptoms such as chest pain, breathlessness, or stroke symptoms. These conditions are now identified immediately, and arrangements are made for the patient to be admitted to hospital.
- **Patient convenience:** Most people are busy with work, family or childcare commitment and thus struggle to find time to physically get to the surgery. We have learnt that many requests can quickly be dealt with remotely. Examples include:
 - Requests for sick notes, letters or forms.
 - Medication reviews and prescription requests.
 - Advice on immunisation status.
 - Advice on the self-care of minor illnesses such as coughs, colds and hay fever. We are able to give verbal advice and also send out patient information sheets.
 - Skin rashes – we now have the technology to allow patients to forward us photographs from their smart phones so that dermatological conditions can be diagnosed and treated remotely.



Dr David Charles | Dr Louis Mok | Dr James Read | Dr Michael Mannion |
Dr Emma Shapiro | Dr Sudam Prabhu | Dr Anna Hewson | Dr Christopher Evans-Hall

These photographs are saved to the electronic record so that the progress of treatment can be monitored.

- **Signposting:** Many patients simply do not need to see a GP but would be better dealt with by Allied Health Professionals such as nurses, nurse practitioners, physiotherapists, pharmacists, counsellors, social workers or social prescribers. We have many of these team members attached to the surgery and patients can often be directed to them via the reception team.

It is intended that these changes are continued long term to fully realise the above benefits. The Manor Surgery welcomes all feedback, please do email us on nnicb-nn.manorsurgeryreceptionist@nhs.net if you have any thoughts to share on how we can improve our systems.



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