



# Danebridge Times

The newsletter from Danebridge Medical Practice

Winter 2019

## Welcome to Danebridge Times

**Our Newsletter is produced seasonally and brings you information on the latest developments within Danebridge Medical Practice.**

### **This issue features:**

- Christmas and New Year opening times
- New team members at Danebridge
- Doctor's on the move
- New Doctors in training
- Online Access
- Patient Participation Group
- 10 ways to improve your mental health!

You can keep up to date with news and events throughout the year through our website and Facebook and LinkedIn pages.

If you have any questions regarding Danebridge Times, or have any articles or suggestions for the next issue, please do not hesitate to get in touch!

## Welcome from our GP Partners

We wish to take this opportunity to thank all of our patients and external partners, who have helped to make Danebridge Medical Practice one which continues to provide a quality service for our community, despite the enormous pressures which are placed upon the NHS.



As we reflect back on this year, it would be inappropriate not to highlight that earlier this year, we were inspected by our Regulator, the Care Quality Commission, which resulted in an overall grading for the Practice of 'Requires Improvement.' All Partners and colleagues have worked tirelessly to ensure that we correct the processes which were found to be wanting. The work which we have undertaken will be re-inspected during the winter of 2019/20.

The inspection has afforded us the opportunity as Partners to strategically review the services which we provide. To that end, all patient households will receive a letter in December advising of our proposals; the letter which you will receive explains how you can be involved in the consultation.

The Government, has published its long term plan for the NHS, which sets out a vision for the future of Primary Care (GP services) and secondary care (hospital services, mental health services) and community care (e.g. district nursing, physiotherapy, podiatry services). This vision sets out how the services will come together to focus on improving the health of the local population. The first phase for Primary Care, is to establish a local Primary Care Network, which brings together all the practices across Northwich. The network will focus on the provision of proactive, personalised, coordinated and integrated health and social care.

As with all Practices within Vale Royal and West Cheshire, we have introduced Care Navigation. Therefore if you contact the surgery for an appointment you will be asked for brief reason for your appointment. This is in order to help our team to direct you to the most appropriate person which may be our practice pharmacist, MSK Practitioner, Nurse, Health Care Assistant, secretary, or an external health care service, e.g. minor ailments or retail pharmacy. There are a limited number of patients any GP can safely see in a day, so we must try to use our appointments as appropriately as possible.

As many of you will know, earlier this year, we said a fond farewell to Dr Nigel Matthews, GP Partner who retired from the Practice. We are delighted to be able to welcome two of our GPs to become Partners, Dr Russell Whitwell and Dr Bushra Gilchrist.

Finally, Dr Jonathan Griffiths, Chair of Vale Royal CCG and Partner at Swanlow Medical Centre in Winsford, produced a blog earlier in the year, which we have included within this Newsletter on how to improve your mental health - we hope that you will find it an interesting read.

From each and every one of us, we wish you and your loved one's an enjoyable, healthy and safe Festive Season.

With warmest regards

Dr Fiona McGregor-Smith  
and Partners  
**Danebridge Medical Practice**

# Christmas and New Year Opening Times

	<b>Danebridge</b>	<b>Kingsmead</b>	<b>Sandiway</b>
Monday 23 December 2019	8.00am-7.00pm	8.00am-6.30pm	8.30am-1.00pm
Tuesday 24 December 2019	8.00am-6.30pm	8.00am-6.30pm	8.30am-1.00pm
Wednesday 25 December 2019	CLOSED	CLOSED	CLOSED
Thursday 26 December 2019	CLOSED	CLOSED	CLOSED
Friday 27 December 2019	8.00am-6.30pm	8.00am-6.30pm	8.30am-1.00pm
Saturday 28 December 2019	CLOSED	CLOSED	CLOSED
Sunday 29 December 2019	CLOSED	CLOSED	CLOSED
Monday 30 December 2019	8.00am-6.30pm	8.00am-6.30pm	8.30am-1.00pm
Tuesday 31 December 2019	8.00am-6.30pm	8.00am-6.30pm	8.30am-1.00pm
Wednesday 1 January 2020	CLOSED	CLOSED	CLOSED
Thursday 2 January 2020	8.00am-7.00pm	8.00am-6.30pm	8.30am-1.00pm
Friday 3 January 2020	8.00am-6.30pm	8.00am-6.30pm	8.30am-1.00pm

**Please call NHS 111 if you require medical assistance when the Practice is closed.**

## NEW TEAM MEMBERS

### Salaried GPs

We welcome Dr Joanna Gregory who commenced in May; Dr Laura Mercer joined in July; Dr Aanu Adetona re-joined following her maternity leave as a Registrar in October; and Dr Warwick Brindley commenced in November as a Salaried GP following his I&R GP Returner programme.

### Nursing Team

Sister Imogen Hollingworth joined in April as a Practice Nurse. In early 2020, we will also welcome a new Health Care Assistant to our team!

### Management Team

We welcome Amanda Skelding Jones, who joined the Practice in September as Business Manager. Mandy has an illustrious career in the NHS most recently as an Associate Director with Cheshire and Wirral Partnership.

### Support Services Team

Ann-Marie Drinkwater joined the team as a Medical Secretary in November. Emma Finnie commenced in August 2020 as a Patient Services Co-ordinator; and Samantha Mainwaring joined in November as an Apprentice Patient Service Co-ordinator.

### DOCTOR'S ON THE MOVE

Dr Nigel Matthews GP Partner, retired from the Practice in May. Dr Rosie Shire departed in October; and Dr Matthew Orton leaves at the end of December.

### DOCTOR'S IN TRAINING

Dr Muhammad Ali and Dr Michael Johnston joined us in August; and Dr Sampa Chail continues on her development programme.

### ONLINE ACCESS

Have you registered for the online apps "Patient Access" or "My GP" yet? It gives you the freedom to book appointments online, request repeat prescriptions and also to view your records.

Please register online at and ask at reception for a 'Consent for Online' form. It can take up to 28 working days for your full access to be set up but you can book an appointment immediately. Further details are available on [www.Danebridge.org.uk](http://www.Danebridge.org.uk).

### SERVICE CHANGES IN 2020

#### Ear Syringing

For a significant number of years, in common with many Primary Care GP Practices we haven't been contracted to deliver an ear syringing service. At Danebridge we have however continued to provide this service. But with increased patient demands and reduced funding to ensure that we are able to deliver safe patient care, it is with regret that we have had to take the decision to withdraw this service from 31 December 2019.

We understand that this will disappoint a number of our loyal patients, but hope you will understand and accept our rationale. In some cases, ear syringing can be provided in

NHS Hospitals or can be purchased from a variety of private providers.

### Repeat Prescriptions

We are **unable to accept** requests over the telephone this is for your safety and security.

Prescriptions can be ordered online or in person. With effect from January 2020, repeat prescriptions will take **THREE** working days to process, rather than two, so please ensure your request is received early so that you do not run out of your medication.

If you are due to go away on holiday and are requesting your prescription early, please make a note of this on your request slip to avoid any unnecessary delays.

### Daffodil Standards for End of Life Care

We will be introducing the RCGP and Marie Curie UK General Practice Core Standards for Advanced Serious Illness and End of Life Care during 2020.

### APPOINTMENTS

Appointments with the Doctor are for **10 minutes and for ONE problem only**. If you would like to discuss more than one problem during your appointment, please mention it when booking, so that our Patient Services Co-ordinator can accommodate your request.. Please help us to help you and keep appointments running on time.

### UNATTENDED APPOINTMENTS

During January to November 2019, 859 (2.5%) patients, or 3.6 patients per day failed to attend their GP appointment, which is a decrease of 0.1% from the previous year. This cost to the NHS is £30,924.00.

If you are unable to attend your appointment, please be courteous and cancel it by calling 01606 544544 to allow other patients to take your place.

### PATIENT PARTICIPATION GROUP (PPG)

The PPG have continued to run health promotions throughout the year including stress management.

The PPG continues to be the liaison between the Practice and the wider patient population and are always delighted to receive feedback.

If you are interested in speaking to or joining the PPG, please ask for an information pack from reception at any of our surgeries.

### FLU VACCINATIONS

The flu vaccination is free to all eligible groups. This year a new vaccine was developed for patients aged 65+ which was delivered in limited quantities on a staggered delivery basis, which resulted in the commencement of our clinics being slightly delayed.

We have vaccinated 6,093 patients (54%) of our eligible patients so far, compared to 7,664 (74%) last year. Appointments are available by calling 01606 544544.

# 10 Ways to Improve your Mental Health

A blog from Dr Jonathan Griffiths, Chair Vale Royal CCG



Apparently 1 in 4 adults, and 1 in 10 children will experience a mental health illness. That means that pretty much all of us will either be affected or know someone who is. The question is, what should you do if you think you need some help and

support? Should you go to your GP? Should you put on a brave face and soldier on? Should you take a holiday, take up mindfulness, start exercising, change your diet, take St John's Wort or find a counsellor? Many people requiring additional support will turn to the NHS for this, but with mental health services overstretched and underfunded they could be in for a long wait.

As a GP I see people with mental health problems in every surgery. Many will be presenting with what the psychiatry services would describe as 'low level' mental health problems, but they can be no less devastating for the individual and their friends and family. I see lots of people in 'crisis' who have reached a point where they do not know what to do next, they are often in tears, unable to see the wood from the trees and struggling to keep their lives on track.

In this blog I want to give you some pointers towards things you can be doing to help yourself, and to help your doctor help you.

## 1. Take stock – do you have a mental health problem, or is this just 'normal'

If your partner has just walked out on you, it's ok to be feeling sad. You may feel more than just sad, you may feel as though the bottom has fallen out of your world, but this is also likely a normal reaction to this adverse life event. It can be useful to try and take a step back and consider whether you feel your reaction is appropriate to the circumstance that you find yourself in. There is a real skill in identifying what is normal and what is not, and this might help you determine your next steps. That is not to say you won't need some help and support even if your response is as expected, but it can help you to realise that you are not 'abnormal', that you are not 'having a breakdown' and that no one is going to suggest you are 'put away' anywhere.

## 2. Get some exercise

The Mental Health Foundation has produced this report on the benefits of physical activity on wellbeing.

It's worth having a look at. A quote from the report states that "Participation in regular physical activity can increase self-esteem and reduce stress and anxiety." This does not mean that you have to take up a sport or start running marathons. Doing anything is better than doing nothing. Walking briskly as you can will have significant benefits both on your physical and mental health. Give it a try. It might not be the entire solution to your mental health problem, but it might just help.

## 3. Reduce your alcohol intake

When we are feeling down, depressed, anxious or stressed it is easy to reach for a drink. The problem is that while this might make you feel momentarily better, the effect soon wears off, leaving you reaching for that second drink, then the third, the fourth and so on. Drinking alcohol regularly can also lead to negative effects on your mental health. Drinkaware talk about this on their webpage here: <https://www.drinkaware.co.uk/alcohol-facts/health-effects-of-alcohol/mental-health/alcohol-and-mental-health/>. Try not to make things worse by self-medicating with alcohol.

Just an aside here. I would also advise that you avoid using cannabis (or other drugs) to help. Cannabis is addictive and can bring health problems of its own. Steer clear.

## 4. Talk to someone

I'm not necessarily talking about a professional here – more about talking to someone you trust about the way you are feeling. This could be one of your friends or a family member. Too many people try to manage low levels of mood and high levels of stress and anxiety on their own. Society has unfortunately conditioned us to think that we all need to be 'strong' and manage things on our own. The reality is that we are all social creatures, able to achieve so much more together than alone. One of the key messages I took from the best-selling '7 Habits of Highly Effective People' by Stephen Covey was that we should strive to be 'interdependent' on other people – it is not a sign of weakness or failure to be asking others to support you, but a way of allowing you to achieve more than you could on your own. Share how you are feeling. It is amazing how much better many people feel just by 'off-loading'. If you feel you need more professional help. This is available. Talking therapies are commissioned across the country. If you live in Cheshire, where I work, then you can self-refer into the Wellbeing Hub. You can find details here: <http://www.cwp.nhs.uk/services-and-locations/services/central-cheshire-wellbeing-hub/>. People often think that you need your GP to refer you to NHS counselling services, but via the link above you can do this without going through your GP. The Wellbeing Hub provides more than 'counselling' and talking therapies includes Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) and psychotherapy. I always tell my patients that talking therapy is likely to be the most effective and helpful thing they can do to help their mental health problem.

## 5. Consider taking a break

This could be a break from work, or home or from the usual routine. Sometimes we just need to step off the treadmill for a moment and breathe. There are pros and cons to this though. Sometimes we need to keep things going, and taking a break removes us from the social networks we are plugged into, making us worse. For some people, taking some time off work is essential and helpful, but for others it can leave them isolated and lonely and have an adverse effect. Only you can judge the best approach for you. If you need time away from work, you can self-certify for the first week of illness. You can download the form here (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/statutory-sick-pay-employees-statement-of-sickness-sc2>) and will need to if you are off for 3 or more days in a row and need to claim Statutory Sick Pay. For that first week **you do not need to see your GP** if it is just for a sick note. If you find that you need longer than a week off work, you will need to self-certify for the first week, then get a note

from your doctor thereafter. It is worth being clear to yourself from the outset about your intentions re time off. Try to plan how long you might need. The longer you are off, the harder it is to get back into work. You need to strike the right balance between time away to help you recover, and getting back into work before you find it too difficult to do so. Your GP can help you with this. An important point here – if you are off sick with a mental health problem, don't make the mistake of thinking you can't go out and about. People are often worried about being seen out in the town when they are off sick. They worry that people will think that if they can go to the shops, they can go to work. Try to get past this. It's an understandable concern, but part of your recovery will be to take walks, to meet people and to start getting your life back into it's usual, normal rhythm. Other breaks are good too – can you afford the time and money for a short holiday? It might be just what you need.

## 6. Find some resources to help you

There is a lot out there that can help. Almost every patient I see with a mental health problem leaves my consulting room with a self-help guide. I'll let you into a secret though – you don't need to see me to get one! They are all here:

<https://www.selfhelpguides.ntw.nhs.uk/cheshirevale/>. These guides are not just information sheets. They do provide lots of information that can help, but their key benefit is that they are self-help guides. There are sections where you are encouraged to think about your situation, write down the answers to questions and receive practical advice that can help. In them you will find relaxation exercises, controlled breathing exercises, instructions about mindfulness and much more. Each guide lists even more resources that are available to you, including helplines and charitable organisations that can help. They are an excellent place to start. If you are a young person, then I would suggest checking out Kooth (<https://www.kooth.com/>). 'Free, safe and anonymous online support for young people'. Definitely check it out. If you are in Cheshire you can also go to the You In Mind website which details mental health services local to you. This is a website I would recommend you take a look at. <https://www.youinmind.org>

## 7. Read a book

This links to point 6. Each of the self-help guides lists additional resources including books that you can often borrow from the local library. These can be incredibly helpful. The first on the list in one of the guides, for example, is 'Feeling Good: The New Mood Therapy' by David D Burns (<https://www.amazon.co.uk/Feeling-Good-New-Mood-Therapy/dp/0380810336>). I have not read it myself, but can confidently recommend it because I know it has been recommended in the guides above. You can also find a list on this website recommending books that have all been endorsed by health experts: <https://reading-well.org.uk/>. Why don't you make a trip to the library with one of these lists?

## 8. Ring a helpline

If you find yourself in crisis and have no friend you can call – there are others out there who are happy to talk to you. The most well-known service is obviously The Samaritans (<https://www.samaritans.org/>) but there are others who can help. They are also listed in the self help guides, and there are many support groups for specific situations. A couple that spring to mind are both bereavement organisations – Cruse Bereavement Care (<https://www.cruse.org.uk/>) and Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide (<https://uksobs.org/>). There are many more. Check out the lists in the self-help guides.

## 9. See your GP

There will be some situations when you will need to see your GP to get further help. Some people will benefit from antidepressant medication (although I hope you can see that I have put this towards the end – antidepressants will not be the answer for many people, and the above approaches can really help before we consider prescriptions). The most commonly used antidepressants are the Selective Serotonin Re-uptake Inhibitors (SSRIs). Of those

the most famous is probably Prozac (fluoxetine), but the most commonly used are citalopram and sertraline. If you want to know how they work it's probably easiest for you to check out this NHS article rather than me going through it all here:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/ssri-antidepressants/>. If you are prescribed an antidepressant, then be aware that they don't work straight away, and need to be taken for a long time. People usually want a drug that they can take every now and then to help calm them down that is not addictive or sedating and can be taken for a short period of time while they sort things out. That drug doesn't really exist! Short acting drugs to calm you would be ones like diazepam (Valium) which are highly addictive and work by sedating you, antidepressants are not addictive in the same way and don't tend to sedate, but take several weeks to work and need to be taken for months. Talk this through with your doctor to explore whether this is what you need. If you are prescribed and antidepressant, then please don't stop taking it without talking to your doctor. I see patients who stop their antidepressants for all kinds of reasons – side effects, lack of improvement, cost of prescriptions or because they were feeling better. I see lots of patients who would have been better talking to me first. Sometimes a change in drug might have been advisable, sometimes a change in dose would have been a better plan.

## 10. Watch out for worrying signs

There are a few things that we all need to watch for with mental health. A small number of people will have severe and enduring mental illness and need prompt medical attention and help. This includes anyone having thoughts of wanting to kill themselves or harm others and those who have psychotic symptoms. Psychotic symptoms are where you are having abnormal thoughts or hallucinations. If you or someone you know is hearing voices or behaving in a bizarre and illogical way, please seek immediate help. You can ring your doctor, call 111 or 999. If you are really worried about the immediate safety of them or others you can use 999 to call the police. Thankfully these situations are not common, but we must all be aware and act accordingly.

I hope you can see that there is much you can do to help yourself in the event of facing mental health difficulties. Some people will only need to do one or two of the things on this list to get themselves back on track, others will need more support. The NHS and in particular your GP is there if you need them. All GPs are used to seeing people with all manner of mental health problems and can guide you through. One of the important things to remember is that even by reading this article you have chosen to be proactive and do something to make yourself feel better. You should be proud of yourself for making the decision to act. Acknowledging that you have a problem is *not* a sign of weakness. I would suggest that it is the opposite – acknowledging a problem is the first step to recovery and a definite sign of strength and resilience. If you are struggling right now, then good luck, and don't forget that help is out there.

Source: <https://drjongriffiths.wordpress.com/2019/02/28/top-10-ways-to-improve-your-mental-health/>