



# Danebridge Times

The newsletter from Danebridge Medical Practice

Winter 2020

## Welcome to Danebridge Times

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

### This issue features:

- Christmas and New Year Opening Times 2020
- New Team Members at Danebridge
- Doctor's on the move
- Online Access
- Appointments
- Repeat Prescriptions
- 10 ways to improve your mental health

You can keep up to date with news and events throughout the year through our website, 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

None of us would in our wildest dreams ever have thought that a virus, or as we now know it, Covid-19, would have such a significant impact within the UK and across the world. It has truly touched us all.

It has been a testing time for everyone, some of you have been shielded; some furloughed from your job; others becoming a teacher to your children; looking after family; being scared and potentially vulnerable; and also not seeing the people you love and cherish for a significant period of time. We also know that some of you will have lost family and friends to this cruel virus - our sympathy and condolences are with you.

As a Practice, we have been here each day and this will continue. As a team we have worked together - at times confused, anxious and upset, whilst recognising that we are here for our patients... I would like to formally thank each and every colleague, we like other Key Workers across the UK and Northwich in particular, have been truly amazing.

Each and every day something new happens and our approach changes, driven by a directive to keep people safe. We have adapted and are operating differently, but we as with the NHS as a whole, continue to be here for you.

In March we changed our appointments system to telephone consultations and if we need to see you, we will invite you to the Practice. Our appointment system has evolved and feedback has been positive, it is more flexible and meets the needs our community - we now offer: emergency, urgent on the day and routine consultations. Initially all consultations are by telephone; we may ask you to provide information through digital channels including secure text messages, video or e-consultation and, if needed, we will see you at one of our surgery locations.

Sandway Surgery is our designated site for patients who are Clinically Extremely Vulnerable, so it is only accessible by appointment invitation. Our consultation regarding the proposed closure of Sandway Surgery continues and early in 2021, we will be holding a range of Engagement Sessions which will be delivered virtually. For further information, please contact Amanda Skelding-Jones, Business Manager by email - [danebridge.surgery@nhs.net](mailto:danebridge.surgery@nhs.net).

As the year draws to a close, we see a new bright light for a different type of future, as the roll out of the Covid-19 Vaccination commenced from 8 December 2020. The vaccination is being delivered in phases, please don't worry, we will contact you when appointments are available for you.

This will be my last year with the Practice, as I hang up my stethoscope at the end of 2021 to commence a new life adventure. I, along with all of the Partnership, are delighted that Dr Mike Mullin will become the new Executive Partner, we will work together over the next year to ensure a seamless transition.

So finally, we wish to take this opportunity to thank all of our patients, our Patient Participation Group (PPG) and external partners, who have helped to make Danebridge Medical Practice one which continues to provide a quality service for our community despite the NHS continuing to be under enormous pressure trying to cope with the increasing demands placed upon it, in a year which we have never ever seen before.

From each and every one of us, we wish you and your loved one's an enjoyable, healthy and safe Festive Season and 2021.

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



## Christmas and New Year Opening Times

	Danebridge	Kingsmead	Sandiway
Monday 21 December	8.00am-6.30pm	8.00am-6.30pm	8.30am-1.00pm
Tuesday 22 December	8.00am-6.30pm	8.00am-6.30pm	8.30am-1.00pm
Wednesday 23 December	8.00am-6.30pm	8.00am-6.30pm	8.30am-1.00pm
Thursday 24 December	8.00am-6.30pm	8.00am-6.30pm	8.30am-1.00pm
Friday 25 December	CLOSED	CLOSED	CLOSED
Saturday 26 December	CLOSED	CLOSED	CLOSED
Sunday 27 December	CLOSED	CLOSED	CLOSED
Monday 28 December	CLOSED	CLOSED	CLOSED
Tuesday 29 December	8.00am-6.30pm	8.00am-6.30pm	8.30am-1.00pm
Wednesday 30 December	8.00am-6.30pm	8.00am-6.30pm	8.30am-1.00pm
Thursday 31 December	8.00am-6.30pm	8.00am-6.30pm	8.30am-1.00pm
Friday 1 January	CLOSED	CLOSED	CLOSED
Saturday 2 January	CLOSED	CLOSED	CLOSED
Sunday 3 January	CLOSED	CLOSED	CLOSED

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

### TEAM UPDATE

#### Salaried GPs

We welcomed Dr Ayodele Adiat and Dr Irvin Teo in March. In August 2020 Dr Muhammad Ali and Dr Michael Johnston joined the Practice following the completion of their GP training with the Practice

#### Doctors on the move

Dr Joanna Gregory and Dr Warwick Brindley have moved on from Danebridge Medical Practice, we're sure that you'll join us in wishing them well for the future.

#### Doctors in training

Registrars - Dr Mohamed Mohamed joined us in August; along with Dr Sampra Chail who commenced her training in 2018 and will conclude in spring 2021.

#### Nursing Team

After nearly 18 years with the Practice we will say goodbye to Sister Gill Dale in December, as she commences a new life adventure in 2021... Good luck and thanks for everything!!

Helen Asante-Siaw joined the team in March as a Health Care Assistant. In January 2021, Emma Goffin will commence as a Practice Nurse.

#### Clinical Team

In early 2021 we are delighted to advise that two new colleagues will be joining our team in the roles of Practice Clinical Pharmacist and a Paramedic for Northwich PCN.

#### Patient Services Team

Joanne Cowell, Claire Cowhig, Hannah Mansell, Rebecca Marsh and Laura Trotter all joined our team over the last year.

#### Colleagues changing roles

Over the last year we have seen a number of colleagues changing roles within the Practice:

- Claire Greenwood, Patient Service Co-ordinator - now specialises in nurse rostering and communications.
- Clare Hulse moved from a Patient Services Co-ordinator role to our specialist team focusing on Clinical Correspondence.
- Kay Russell became a Trainee Healthcare Worker from her former Medical Secretary role.
- George Clarke and Emma Finnie became Medical Secretaries from their Patient Service Co-ordinator roles.

### APPOINTMENTS

April 2020- September 2020:



### ONLINE ACCESS

During the pandemic we request that patients download the NHS app from your normal app store, if you do not already have online access, e.g. Patient Access, Ask My GP etc.

Online access enables you to book an appointment, order repeat prescriptions and to also view your records.

### REPEAT PRESCRIPTIONS

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

We recommend that prescriptions are ordered online through the NHS app, or by emailing [DanebridgePrescriptions@nhs.net](mailto:DanebridgePrescriptions@nhs.net). Please try to avoid visiting one of our surgeries.

Repeat prescriptions will take THREE working days for the Practice to process, 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.

# 10 Ways to Improve Your Mental Health

*A blog from Dr Jonathan Griffiths, former Chair Vale Royal CCG  
GP Swanlow Medical Centre, Winsford*



**We featured Dr Griffiths blog in last years Newsletter.**

**From our own patients we recognise that managing ones health and wellbeing is critical, especially this year.**

**So let's revisit....**

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. <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/sites/default/files/lets-get-physical-report.pdf> 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 as briskly as you can will have significant benefits both on your physical and mental health. Give it a

## **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 it's 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 ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_7\\_Habits\\_of\\_Highly\\_Effective\\_People](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_7_Habits_of_Highly_Effective_People)) 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.nrw.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.

***If you have a question for Dr Griffiths you can find him on Twitter - @DrJonGriffiths***

Source: [Top 10 ways to improve your mental health – Dr Jon Griffiths \(wordpress.com\)](https://www.drjongriffiths.com/2018/05/10-ways-to-improve-your-mental-health/)