

## Quantock Vale Surgery News Winter 2020

As we enter another challenging phase of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, we thought it would be a good time to update our patients about how we continue to provide care for them in such difficult times.

Our priority at the surgery is to provide good quality care to the local community at the same time as balancing the safety and wellbeing of all of our patients and staff. We are open as normal for general enquiries and health related matters; however we have to work in different ways to achieve this.

We have measures in place to ensure that we can offer social distancing in the reception and waiting area. Because of this and for the safety of all of us we have to limit the amount of people in these areas at any one time. To help us achieve this please only turn up at your allotted appointment time and only come to the reception for other matters if absolutely necessary.

If you have any general questions about COVID 19 you can access up to date information online, via the NHS app or by ringing 111. If you have any other general enquiries you can contact the surgery via the website using Online Consult, e- mailing or phoning. We understand that patients will have many questions during this time and especially as we enter into another period of lock down. We are best placed to manage these queries more effectively and safely using the methods above.

We continue to offer a phlebotomy service for patients who need to have blood tests. Bloods requested by one of the GP's, the nurse practitioner, or tests that have been requested from a hospital or an outpatient department will be prioritised. Requests from patients for blood tests will be assessed on an individual basis. Appointments for the general nursing team are still being offered. Appointments may need to be longer to allow for cleaning of the clinical area and to change personal protective equipment between each patient in line with government guidance.

To allow us to practice as safely as possible we offer pre bookable telephone appointments with the Doctors and Nurse practitioner. These can be booked in advance and the individual clinician will phone you in the first instance to triage, or ask questions, about the presenting problem. If the issue cannot be managed by a phone call we can offer other methods of trying to resolve your concerns. The clinician involved in your care can send a link to your smart phone so that photographs can be sent to us and stored securely in your notes. This method of communication has been particularly helpful in managing care and reducing the need for patients to come to the surgery. Furthermore if it is appropriate, your clinician can invite you to have a video consultation. To do this, you or a relative with you, would need to have access to a smart phone with a camera. If the clinician consulting with you feels it is necessary to see you at the surgery you will be offered a face to face appointment. Our extended hour's appointments are now available again but will be limited to telephone consultations.

Lastly, if you are over 65, or are shielding and have not yet received your flu jab at this time please contact the surgery as a matter of urgency.

We appreciate your patience during this period and thank you for your understanding at this particularly difficult time.

