



Reading recent posts on social media, it is apparent there is a lot of concern from Patients about various issues. Having summarised the concerns and questions and presented them to the Practice staff at Callington and Gunnislake the following is intended to try to answer some of the questions and also provides some exciting news about dispensing medication.

Can we reduce the time between ordering and collection medication? *Not currently – sickness absence and county-wide difficulties in recruiting new staff have meant being unable to return to a 3-day collection time. Our team are working tirelessly to try and keep as up to date as they can. In the year April 21 to 22 we lost 1,408 dispensing hours (37.5 weeks of full-time hours). COVID has caused huge pressure on staff absence and many other knock-on issues. The team have been prepared to put in 1874 hours of overtime in the last year alone to ensure that the Dispensary/Pharmacy has remained open.*

It is not always apparent if the appointment is at Callington or Gunnislake. *We have reminded reception to confirm these details but please ask if you are unsure.*

You only need to make a verbal request and do not need to complete any paperwork to access patient records. Is this true? *Yes, that is correct, a verbal request is sufficient for a request for information, but reception staff are directed to fill in a form (that the patient would receive if making the request in writing), so we have a record of the request being made. We do like the patient to complete the form themselves so that no errors are made, or information missed that was expected.*

Can we return to being able to make advance appointments? *All Nursing appointments were always available in advance and still are. Extended hours appointments with GPs are available on Saturdays now (soon to incl. evenings), telephone appointments with GPs, medication review appointments with our Pharmacists, Social Prescriber, Mental Health Practitioner, First Contact Physiotherapist, and acute type appointments with our Nurse Practitioner/Paramedics are all available in advance in the Practice. Patients can use eConsult to consult with a clinician electronically at a convenient time for them, receiving a response back by the end of the next working day. There is also the option to book a video consultation, in advance or on the day, with an NHS doctor via the LIVI service.*

Can we take prescriptions to a chemist and not to the surgery? *Yes, patients can choose to not be dispensing but would need to come and collect their signed prescription if it can not be sent electronically to the Pharmacy of choice.*

When are we going to return to normal? What is the new normal? Are we ever going to return to calling the surgery to be given a specific time to attend the appointment opposed to waiting for a phone call? *As we are slowly getting back to pre-pandemic routines, we should be able to go back to pre-booking the appointments not mentioned previously. However, appointments on the day were always triaged unless they could be booked with another type of clinician.*

When are annual medication reviews going to start? How soon can I expect to be seen? *We restarted this last autumn; we are still a little bit behind but aim to catch up over the coming months.*

Why are patients having to wait outside at Gunnislake Practice, sometimes in bad weather and often for more than fifteen minutes? Many report that they are ignored. *The space at Gunnislake was an issue as we could not have too many people in the foyer due to infection control guidance. That has now changed so more people will be able to come in the building if they feel comfortable to do so. Due to the backlog of prescriptions, if someone arrives to collect their medication and it has not yet been made up or there is a query the staff must go out the back and action the request. This can be time consuming dependent on the number of items to be dispensed or if they need to find out additional information from a colleague or the Pharmacist. If the staff must go back and forth from their terminal to check a patient's records it is possible that others in the queue appear to be ignored. It is certainly not their intention to ignore anyone.*

The good news is that the Practice will be installing automated dispensing machines first at Callington in late May and then in Gunnislake in early Autumn.

If you have any questions you would like answered, please contact the PPG via the Tamar Valley health webpage or on Facebook.

Sharon Trafford. TVH PPG Chair.