

The GP Patient Survey 2008.

You may be aware through the press and TV that the government has published details of a survey it organised again this year of patient's experience of GP services. As a practice we do value communication with you so we thought we would like to have some information about this survey.

The survey is called "The GP Patient Survey – your doctor, your experience, your say". Questionnaires were distributed in January 2008 and responses collected in April 2008. The survey was sent to a random group of patients selected from all of our registered patients, not just those who use our services on a regular basis. The results are based on around 350 replies and the response rate is around 50%.

Our results are as follows.

- 83% of people said they were satisfied with their ability to get through to the surgery on the telephone. (was 80% in 2007 survey)
- 81% of people who tried to get a quick appointment with a GP said they were able to do so within 48 hours. (72% in 2007 survey)
- 74% of people who wanted to book ahead for an appointment with a doctor reported that they were able to do so. (77% in 2007 survey)
- 84% of people who wanted an appointment with a particular doctor thought that they could have one (85% in 2007 survey)
- 91% of people referred to hospital reported that they had discussed choice of hospital with the doctor.

Our figures are very similar to the national average figures and the local PCT figures. With a sample size of 350 then a 1% variation results from 3.5 patients expressing a view one way or another. This clearly is not significant when you consider that we have 16,000 registered patients! The survey was sent to around 5% of our registered population.

More details can be found on the NHS Choices website, at www.nhs.uk

Our Views

We always welcome comments from our patients on our services and we hope that we give patients the opportunity to have a say about the services we provide here at the practice. We run our own survey annually that explores in much more detail what our patients think of what we do and how we do it. The results are shared with our patients forum meeting every year.

The national survey costs a lot of money, around £11 million pounds per year and asks questions that may be misleading or not understood. We are also concerned that the sample size is not large enough to allow anything other than a rough "feel" for how we are doing. We are pleased that our results are if anything better in 2008 compared with 2007.

The doctors and the practice team all work very hard to act in the best interests of our patients and to provide a quality service for all, and particularly those who need it most – those with chronic and serious illnesses, the very young and the elderly. We try our best to cater for all demands on our services, from those who wish to be seen on the day to those who wish to book ahead, from those who always want to see the same doctor to those who want to see any doctor or a different doctor for certain conditions. However, there is no such thing as a perfect appointment system and we have spent many years trying to come up with one!

The key points we would like to make are

- We encourage patients to generally see the same doctor when possible.
- We book ahead up to 5 working days. If we go longer than this then we find a significant increase in our “did not attend” rate. Prior to us implementing this we would have around 200 wasted appointments per month.
- We keep some appointments for the doctors that are booked on the day. These are allocated by our highly trained triage nurses. If you feel you need to be seen on the day then we will always see you but this must be for a medical reason rather than convenience. We will never refuse to see anybody who believes they are unwell and need to be seen.
- The doctors all offer telephone consultations. If your matter can be dealt with by a telephone discussion e.g. a prescription enquiry or a certificate then please ask for a telephone consultation. This is much quicker for everyone and better for the environment and the car-park!
- We have a highly skilled nursing team who are able to deal with lots of problems including prescribing.
- Each doctor has a designated member of staff who acts as the doctors PA. They are often a great help in sorting out administration type problems. They are available to you on the telephone.

You may have seen in the press or on TV recently that there has been a lot of discussion about surgery opening times. Despite the fact that their survey showed that 84% of patients were satisfied with the surgeries opening time, the government have decided to force through extended opening. This will mean that we will be opening earlier in the mornings and later in the evenings on a few days every week and also opening on Saturday morning. This will be for ROUTINE appointments only and all emergency patients should use the out-of-hours doctor service. The full details of this have yet to be agreed with the PCT but we anticipate the new arrangements starting in September.

We think that the results show that GPs and traditional general practices continue to demonstrate high levels of user satisfaction and shows that GPs are doing their best to provide what patients want. We hope you will continue to support us.