

Dartmouth Patients Participation Group Annual Members Meeting

Chairman's Report for 2014/15

Summary

Your Patients Participation Group (PPG) has met five times since the last AMM held on 10th July 2014. We have worked with the Dartmouth Medical Practice to implement the agreed Joint Action Plan 2014-15 which was based on the results of the survey we conducted last Spring on Patients Opinion and we have had productive exchanges with the Practice on a wide range of issues including: the plan to relocate the Surgery to a new state-of-the-art building, concerns regarding the closure of the local Minor Injuries Unit, support for mental health and for carers and various matters relating to improved communications between patients and the Practice. We have established a new Patients Group website and have drafted a new Constitution and Terms of Reference for the Patients Group and PPG. Your PPG also met with the Care Quality Commission inspectors in July 2014 in order to express a patient point of view.

The membership of the PPG Committee has changed over the year and will need to be confirmed by the AMM. In addition, we have shared information and sought the views of the members of our Virtual PPG which enables us to get feedback from a wider cross section of the patients. Lastly, the PPG has continued to build its contacts with other PPGs to learn from their activities and experiences.

Relocation of the Surgery

For some time now there has been discussion of the need to find new premises for the Surgery that are more fit for purpose than the present premises, which are not designed as a Surgery and are now exceedingly cramped, not allowing for any expansion even though the demand for services is growing and the nature of general practice is evolving. In the course of these discussions it has been proposed by the Torbay and South Devon Care and Health Trust and the South Devon and Torbay Clinical Commissioning Group that the Cottage Hospital and Dartmouth Clinics also have serious shortcomings. Consequently, planning has been initiated on co-locating the Surgery, Hospital and Clinic on a new site with new custom built facilities well served by public transport and with adequate parking space. The next stage is for the Trust to set out a framework for the project and identify possible options which can then be the subject of thorough consultations with the patient community. A Steering Committee of all the key stakeholders has been established under the chairmanship of the lay non-executive director of the CCG.

Minor Injuries Unit

Your PPG has expressed great concern Torbay Health Trust's abrupt and unforeseen closure of Dartmouth's Minor Injuries Unit. This is a result of staff shortages. While recruitment efforts are continuing there is no certainty when the MIU will reopen. Consequently, members of the PPG have continued to request an early resolution of the situation, possibly by drafting in staff from other MIU's. Meanwhile Dartmouth patients are being asked to travel to either Brixham or Totnes for treatment. For some disadvantaged patients this is problematic, to say the least.

Support for mental health

A member of the PPG, Diana Knight (a retired consultant psychiatrist) has worked with Practice—with Dr. Viviana Ludwig—to prepare a patient leaflet that sets out what services are available to support mental health care and how these services may be accessed. We are most grateful to both Diana and Viviana for their efforts on this matter. It would be interesting for us to get feedback from patients who have used these services telling us how useful they were in resolving their problems and how accessible they were. Was adequate help forthcoming and what were the delays in getting help?

Improved communications

Last year's PPG Survey highlighted a matter that has long concerned the PPG—namely, the need for the Practice to communicate better with patients. DMP recognised that greater efforts are needed in this area offering win-win outcomes for the DMP and NHS, as well as for patients. There are a number of different channels that can be used to achieve this goal: an improved and more regular newsletter, a regularly updated website that contains an expanded range of information, better use of the notice boards in the Surgery waiting areas and the installation of an electronic information screen with useful health messages, and a greater range of leaflets addressing the needs of patients with specific illnesses (e.g. diabetes, cardiac problems, asthma, etc.). Your PPG has worked with DMP on all these areas over the past year. We hope you will agree that the website is now more up-to-date, but DMP recognises that further efforts are needed.

Emails are a means to communicate key information to patients directly. But to date less than a third of patients have provided the Practice with their email addresses. In this digital age when so much information is shared via the web and where using emails is a much prompter and more efficient way to communicate than mail, ***it is vital that all patients with email should give their email addresses to DMP.***

Also in the interests of informing our patient community of our activities and to help us fulfil our objective of promoting health awareness and self-care, our PPG has established its own website (www.dartpatients.co.uk) during the past year with the assistance of Connor Webb, an Academy student who is also a member of the PPG. Do please visit it regularly and use it to send us feedback via the Dart patients' blog.

PPG Committee Membership and the Virtual PPG

The PPG is very conscious of the need to seek the full range of views and concerns of all categories of DMP patients, so as to be better able to assist the DMP in providing improved health care. We are therefore keen to continue expand our *membership, particularly to include under-represented groups*: e.g. carers, young people, mothers with toddlers, and patients aged 25-55. We recognise that these are groups of people mostly with little spare time. So we have established a Virtual PPG which involves no meetings and a limited amount of time. Participants are asked for feedback by email on specific issues. So far 20 people have volunteered to join the Virtual PPG and we are keen to recruit others.

PPG Constitution

The PPG has until now been governed by some rather sketchy Terms of Reference drafted when the PPG was first launched. The time has come to put in place a more considered Constitution. This has been prepared following a template developed by the Patients Association in consultation with a reference group of PPG chairs. This sets out our aims and objectives, the modalities for their pursuit and the code of practice which should govern our activities and we now ask the AMM to endorse it.

18 June 2015