



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, MUSICAL INTERLUDE and OPEN EVENING WITH GUEST SPEAKER

“Mr Richard Meddings, Chairman of NHS England”

PATIENT PARTICIPATION GROUP ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Wednesday 11 May 2022

The Chairman of the Victoria Medical Centre PPG, Mary Orr, opened the meeting by giving a review of the last two years.

In the absence of live events the PPG had sent out a stream of Covid-related newsflashes on behalf of the practice to keep patients up-to-date with changes in services and the latest Covid rules, as well as exhorting patients to get vaccinated. We have over 1,000 names of patients on the PPG mailing list and we and the practice would welcome more. The PPG is independent from the practice. Whatever your opinion it will be listened to.

The formal business of the PPG AGM then followed with thanks to retiring committee member Gloria Leoni (star of VMC's Covid video) for her long service and the rest of the committee re-elected by a show of hands.

On behalf of VMC, Dr Rankine then summarised the last two years and how the practice had managed to adapt to the pandemic and immunisation programme.

The changes required not only being able to cope with Covid but also making sure the surgery provided care for other conditions. From the records, sadly at least seven

patients died from a primary cause of Covid. They were all over 65 years. Going forward, patients continue to be offered the choice of a face to face, telephone or online routine appointment and all urgent appointments on the day will continue to start with a phone call and patients will be offered a face to face appointment if needed clinically. This is the same system as before Covid. Access remains about the same as pre Covid also. All clinics will be fully functioning when the Women's health Clinic will restart at the end of the month. There is a backlog and demand is high so the message was please help us to help you.

MUSICAL INTERLUDE

Award-winning violinist and chamber musician Sarah Trickey then gave a short violin recital. The healing power of music is well known and the practice hopes to introduce more music events in future.

GUEST SPEAKER Mr Richard Meddings, Chairman of NHS England

Newly appointed Mr Meddings (RM) explained that as an outsider he is still in an NHS learning curve, essentially listening to how this vast public service works from top to bottom, and he is far from having all the answers. He was supported by Dr Nikita Kanani, the Medical Director of Primary Care for NHS England and NHS Improvement.

RM is focussing on access to primary care services in three key areas

1. Reduction of waiting lists – currently hampered by shortages of trained staff
2. Access to urgent and emergency care – including clogged up ambulance services
3. Access via more digitalisation of services – such as the NHS App

n.b. This is the link to a publicity leaflet about the NHS App and how you can access a range of NHS services, order medications etc on your smart phone or tablet:

<https://digital.nhs.uk/binaries/content/assets/website-assets/services/nhs-app/resources-for-gp-practices/leaflet-and-poster-for-office-printing/nhs-app-a4-leaflet-to-be-folded.pdf>

RM observed that the NHS is suffering from many years of neglect not just to its hospitals but also to its antiquated computer systems that inhibit communications between primary care services (mainly GPs and pharmacies) and secondary care services (mainly hospital and ambulance services and mental health care). A major

task is to make the current unsatisfactory NHS IT systems fit for purpose.

He said there is also a huge shortage in the workforce in all areas. The NHS employs 1.2 to 1.3 million workers and currently there is a shortfall of at least 100,000 doctors, nurses, health care assistants, administrators, cleaners and other roles. These individuals need training so there is no quick fix.

In response to a question about poor physiotherapy services in South Westminster, it was revealed that as a result of campaigning by patients and by the practice, VMC is hoping that a First Contact Physiotherapist will be available in person on site three days a week.

In response to questions about the under-funding of the NHS, RM said that the problem was more complex than simply throwing money at the NHS and involved taking advantage of radical new ideas such as the Hospitals at Home initiative, although he was unable to explain how this would work in the case of discharged dementia patients. It was pointed out that social care services are not funded by the NHS but by local authorities whose budgets have suffered severe cuts as a result of government policy.

In response to a question about the importance of Continuity of Care reducing costs and delivering better health conditions, RM reassured the meeting that GP practices are at the heart of the NHS and there is no long-term plan to dismantle them or prevent patients having face-to-face consultations or charging for GP appointments. However, he stressed that GPs should get support staff able to take away the pressure by dealing with minor problems via a triage system. Dr Rankine intervened and said that triage only works well when the triage is undertaken by a senior individual.

In response to a question asking if he approved of the the recent sale of several GP practices (and 500,000 patients) to an American health insurance company, RM was non-committal, but Dr Rankine and others felt passionately that we should not lose the partnership model whereby a GP practice is a private business owned by partners and cannot be sold on. She reiterated that VMC and LPMC were not able to be sold as they are an NHS partnership.

In response to a question regarding the benefit or otherwise of the new Primary Care

Networks of practices sharing expertise and resources RM and Dr Rankine agreed that there are positive benefits once patients get used to having access to some services at other locations in the area, an example being the availability of ultrasound scanning at a local practice.

There was no time to ask questions regarding the increasing danger of excluding patients who do not have access to a computer or who are not IT savvy, or the reason for the nationwide shortage of GPs and certain medications. The meeting ended at 7.50 but RM continued to answer questions as the audience of around 60-70 was leaving.

VMC Patient Participation Group

The logo consists of a solid blue square with the word "Eail" written in white, bold, sans-serif font. The letter "i" has a white underline.