



Welcome to our summer newsletter! This edition focuses on helping us reduce waste medicines. There are some alarming figures on how much medication in Norfolk and Waveney is wasted each year and we will share the quantities of unused medication that were returned to us in June. We have details of some new information that is available from the surgery for carers and an update for patients who have had hearing aids provided by the hospital and need replacement batteries.

There is a farewell message from Dr Thirkell and a 'hello' from Catherine our new Practice Nurse, who some of you may have met already. We remind patients of the option to have their prescription sent electronically to the pharmacy of their choice and our clinical feature is on seasonal hay fever. Enjoy the read!

## £4.7 million pounds wasted!

We make no apology by carrying this stark message on the front page of our Practice newsletter this time. You have read it correctly; £4.7 million pounds of medicines are wasted every year in Norfolk and Waveney and the local Clinical Commissioning Groups that are ultimately responsible for the management of health budgets in the area are encouraging surgeries and their patients to help reduce this sum by a simple check.

As the Eastern Daily Press recently reported, this £4.7 million could pay for around 40 additional GPs, 180 community nurses or 313 courses of drug treatment for cancer patients, instead of the money being wasted in unopened, unused drugs.

Once an unwanted medication has left the dispensary or pharmacy, it cannot be reused, even if it is unopened and so the 'open the bag campaign' is encouraging patients to check what they have ordered against what they need, before leaving the pharmacy or dispensary. We continue this feature overleaf but before you turn over, take a guess at how many boxes of unopened medication were returned to our Practice in June alone!



## OPEN THE BAG

**Before you leave the pharmacy.**

An estimated **£4.7m\*** of unused medicines are wasted every year in Norfolk and Waveney.

Of the £4.7m worth of unused medicines we estimate that:

- **£1.69m** is being returned to pharmacies because it's not needed
- **£1.91m** is left in the home and is out of date
- **£0.78m** is disposed of in care homes

\*Based on Department of Health figures for the UK nationally.

**NHS**  
The Clinical Commissioning Groups for Great Norwich and Waveney, North Norfolk, South Norfolk, West Norfolk and Norwich

Once an unwanted medicine has left the pharmacy, it cannot be used even if it's not been opened.  
By reducing the amount of medicines being wasted each year, we could increase the available funding for other vitally needed health services.

Please **OPEN THE BAG** - if you don't need all the medicine please hand it back at the counter or to the delivery driver.



For more information visit: [http://tiny.cc/YourMedicines\\_YourNHS](http://tiny.cc/YourMedicines_YourNHS)

## Open the bag

106

That's the number! How did your guess compare? One hundred and six boxes of tablets, creams and injections were returned to the Practice during June 2016 that were unopened and not required. The cost of each medication varies. Some, such as a month's supply of aspirin, are inexpensive to the NHS at 68p but others, such as the 100 pain relief tablets costing £96.60, a lot more expensive. We accept that sometimes people will have recovered and so the rest of the medication prescribed for some illnesses may not be required, but the 106 cartons and containers that we have collected are full, unopened boxes with the medication not even started. We accept that sometimes, for a number of reasons, medicines are changed midterm and there will be wastage but our request to patients is to only order the repeat medications they actually need.

It is so easy for people to say to us every month that they would like further supplies of 'everything on repeat' but sometimes things like creams and pain relief are not used every day and are supplied in containers or packages that have more than enough for a month, so may only be required every other month. For this reason, we are playing our part and will be asking patients to only order the items they need. We are not rationing repeat medication but just trying to make the best use of public money.



This collection of 106 returned cartons of medication for our Practice alone has cost the NHS (and you if you pay for your medication) over £1,500. Multiplied across the year, that £18,000 could be used for alternative care, medications and treatment.

Help us reduce this quantity of unused medications by simply 'opening the bag' before you leave the dispensary or the pharmacy.

Thank you.

## Information for carers

We are pleased to advise that we have new supplies of the 2016 – 2017 Norfolk Carers Handbook. This free publication is available from our Reception desks and provides a wealth of information for carers and the people they care for. It covers carers rights, planning ahead, money matters and some valuable support around the health and well-being of carers themselves. If you are a carer, please tell us. It is useful for us to know, so we can record this on your medical record, and if they are registered with us, the record of the person you are caring for.



**Do you care for a family member or friend?**

Do you need support?  
Norfolk Carers Handbook 2016-17  
Pick up this free handbook to find the help and advice that is available to you.

**Norfolk Carers**

0808 808 9876  
Call our friendly local Advice Line, it's free from a landline, 9-5 Mon-Fri, 10-2 Saturdays. Answerphone available.

07497 802854 (text only)  
norfolkcarers.org.uk  
Norfolk Carers  
@norfolkcarers

#norfolkcarershandbook



As some of you may have heard, we are now 'live' with the new NHS Electronic Prescription Service. This largely concerns patients who, because of where they live, have to collect their medication from Pharmacies and not our dispensaries in Poringland or Rockland St Mary.

Ordering your medication is unchanged, but instead of printing and signing a paper prescription our doctors authorise it digitally and then send it electronically to the Pharmacy of your choice.

This choice (known as a nomination) is recorded in your medical record and will be where your prescriptions are sent until an alternative nomination is made.

Now most local Pharmacies know we are live with this system, they may have spoken with you about this. If not, ask them or us about making a nomination.

## Hearing Aids

With the introduction of a number of NHS hearing aid providers, there are new arrangements for the collection of batteries for patients who had their aids provided by the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital.

Batteries can be obtained from the Norfolk Deaf Association (both their mobile and community clinics) and from the Audiology Reception desk at the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital. Patients will be given a year's supply on the production of their 'white hearing aid card'.

The Norfolk Deaf Association mobile clinic visits the Budgens car park in Poringland once a month. Visit their website at [www.norfolkdeaf.org.uk](http://www.norfolkdeaf.org.uk) for details.

## Hello Catherine!

Catherine is our new Practice Nurse and joined us in May after the retirement of Nettie.

Catherine has a number of years' experience in Practice Nursing having worked both in Yorkshire and most recently in Harleston.



She joins us with a wealth of experience in managing long term conditions such as asthma and diabetes and brings skills that will complement the existing nursing team.



## Hay fever relief

It's that time of year when many people are suffering from hay fever. Here are our top tips on helping reduce symptoms.

- Close your windows first thing in the morning and at night.
- Try rubbing Vaseline lightly around your nostrils to stop pollen going up your nose.
- Rinse your face regularly when levels are high.
- Wear sunglasses when you are outside. Wrap around glasses are even better!
- Try and avoid mowing the lawn or gardening on high pollen days.
- After you have been outside, change your clothes. Pollen attaches itself to clothes and will stay with you!
- Take a daily antihistamine tablet that can be obtained from your local pharmacy.

If your symptoms become extreme, contact the surgery.

## A personal 'thank you' from Dr Thirkell



I would like to thank patients for their best wishes, hugs, cards and gifts to mark my retirement. I have really appreciated their thoughtfulness.

It has been like a trip down memory lane for me when they have recalled the significant moment in their lives that we shared; such as a home birth, a visit to a sick child or end of life care for a relative.

It has also confirmed to me the privilege it has been to work as a GP in this Practice for 27 years. I shall miss seeing patients and wish them 'all the best'.

I shall also miss the camaraderie of the staff. Please see the article alongside this item on the bread making lesson we had to mark my retirement.

I expect to keep myself busy. My plans for the next year vary from learning to swim the crawl to travelling to Antarctica!

With best wishes

Claire Thirkell

For those patients that were registered with Dr Thirkell, your formal registered and accountable GP will in due course become Dr Amy O'Connell.

Many of you will have met Dr O'Connell whilst she has been working with us over the past 12 months. As advised in the special edition of the newsletter, she will become a formal Partner in the Practice from 8<sup>th</sup> August.



## 'Ready Steady Knead'

That was the call from across the kitchen when a group of Practice staff joined Dr Thirkell on a bread making lesson recently to mark her retirement.

With a host of enthusiastic bakers in the Practice (you may have read on our website about our 2015 bake off), Dr Thirkell was keen to do something different and so we gathered at CNS school under the watchful eye of Sue Hudson, who runs bread making workshops across East Anglia.

With flour, yeast and warm water to hand, we were off and what a great lesson we all had. We each made a split loaf and soda bread with honey & walnuts and watched a demonstration of how to make pesto savoury whirls (which were very tasty warm from the oven with a cup of coffee).

Here are two photographs from the day. Our warm bread was eaten with a ploughman's lunch and retirement fizz!!

