

Dartmouth Patients Participation Group Annual members meeting

Chairman's Report for 2013/14

Summary

Your Patients Participation Group (PPG) Committee has met seven times since the last AGM held on 26th June 2013. We have discussed a wide range of issues including: ways to achieve greater continuity of care, modifications to the appointments system, possible improvements to the system of prescriptions; the Moor to Sea Locality Plan under preparation by the local Clinical Commissioning Group, follow up of patients after discharge from hospital, and various matters relating to improved communications between patients and the Dartmouth Medical Practice (DMP).

In February, the PPG undertook a Survey of Patients' Opinion, which was the subject of a report finalised in June 2014. Based on this Survey and the DMP responses to patients' recommendations and suggestions, working together with the DMP, the PPG has elaborated a Joint Action Plan for 2014/15.

The membership of the PPG Committee has changed over the year and will need to be reconfirmed by the AGM. In addition, the PPG is in the process of setting up a Virtual PPG which will enable it to obtain the views of a wider cross section of the patients through a panel of volunteers connected via the internet. Lastly, the PPG is seeking to build its contacts with other PPGs to learn from their activities and experiences.

The PPG Survey

In February 2014, DMP assisted the PPG in undertaking a Survey of patients' opinion. This is the first time the PPG has collected patients' suggestions and recommendations on the health care they receive from the DMP. 314 questionnaires were completed, covering about 4% of the patient community (10% of families). The age distribution of respondents reflected the demographic character of the Dartmouth area with 64% aged 65 or more.

49% respondents were fully satisfied and 45% were moderately satisfied with the services provided by DMP. Many comments were highly appreciative of the care the respondents had received. At the same time a number of important specific issues were raised. Some of these were widely shared. In all 752 comments were received. A Summary of the Survey is posted on the DMP website and the full survey report is available on request. The Summary includes DMP's detailed responses to 26 specific recommendations and suggestions that emerged from the report. These provided the basis for compiling, together with the DMP, a detailed Joint Action Plan setting out 22 specific actions to be taken aimed at both strengthening the effectiveness of the PPG and improving communications and the health care provided by the DMP. This Plan is also posted on the DMP website and I would urge all those interested in the matter to look at the Plan and let us know your views.

Continuity of care

The PPG Survey revealed that the most pressing concern of patients was the difficulty of seeing the same doctor even when in relation to one event of ill health. DMP recognises

patients' concern and are committed where possible to ensure continuity of care, or at least have a patient's main doctor to follow the treatment provided. However, because most doctors in the Practice work only 2-3 days a week, DMP cannot ensure that a patient sees only one doctor, nor is it always considered best for the patient that they should. Over the next year, DMP is committed to exploring ways to see how the DMP might achieve greater continuity of care, particularly in the management of appointments.

Appointments

With PPG support, DMP has introduced a system of phone consultations as a first step in deciding on what care a patient may need when they first seek care for a new medical problem. This system seems to be working well, has received strong support from patients and is resulting in significantly greater efficiency in the use of DMP resources. The Joint Action Plan addresses a number of specific concerns that patients have raised with regard to phone consultations.

Prescriptions

Many patients responding to the PPG Survey raised issues relating to the review and renewal of prescriptions. The Joint Action Plan envisages DMP looking into ways to reduce delays, take care of special needs, and avoid misunderstandings, in part through the promotion of electronic prescribing.

Moor to Sea Locality Plan

DMP falls within the purview of the NHS's plans for an area stretching from Dartmoor to the sea (known as the Moor to Sea Locality Plan). During the past year the PPG has participated in various consultations aimed at assisting the Local Commissioning Group in formulating a 5 Year plan for health services. This will cover such matters as the future of the Dartmouth cottage hospital. The Plan is still under preparation, but we have been promised a further opportunity to comment on it once it is ready.

Follow up after discharge from hospital and palliative care

The PPG Survey indicated that a number of patients were worried about reconnecting with support from DMP after discharge from hospital. The Joint Action Plan envisages new step to improve follow up, especially in the case of elderly and vulnerable patients on their discharge from hospital and on the provision of palliative care where needed, through clear communication of expectations and strengthened co-ordination among the different professionals and services concerned.

Improved communications

The PPG Survey highlighted a matter that has long concerned the PPG—namely, the need for DMP to communicate better with patients. DMP recognises that greater efforts are needed in this area and will offer 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.). At the same time, DMP will make greater efforts to collect the email addresses of patients.

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 expand our committee 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 set in motion a process to establish a Virtual PPG which will involve no meetings and a limited amount of time providing feedback by email on specific issues. So far 17 people have volunteered to join the Virtual PPG and we are keen to recruit others.

PPG Constitution

The PPG is currently governed by some rather sketchy Terms of Reference drafted when the PPG was first launched. The time has come to take a new look at these and, if appropriate, to draft a new more complete governance document. We will do this task in the coming year and submit the new constitution for approval at the next AGM.

8 July 2014