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*health matters...*

Tuesday, 20 July 2021

Dear patient,

I am writing to update you on the current situation.

No doubt many of you will be aware of the extra ordinary pressure that the health service is under. In my 30 years of working in general practice I have never known things as they are right now. As patients you may have experienced increased waiting times on the phones and for appointments. For staff it is the relentless (& in the vast majority, entirely appropriate) demand together with having to cope with staff absence due to sickness, holiday or isolating. **Quite simply demand is outstripping our capacity to meet it.** The management team and I are doing everything we can to boost our capacity and ensure we continue to offer the efficient and caring service that we have always been known for.

In addition to this increased demand we are also asking staff to work days off, evenings and weekends to continue to deliver the Covid-19 vaccination programme. The whole team is exhausted.

We are doing our absolute best to meet the demands on us. I ask that you consider the following before you contact us:

1. **Try self-help first.** Seek advice from nhs.uk. It is an excellent resource for many of the issues we are dealing with.
2. **Visit your local pharmacy** for everyday illnesses. Many pharmacists can now prescribe for some minor ailments as well as offer over the counter medications.
3. Our eConsult platform (accessed via the website) has a huge amount of information and self-help resources on it too.
4. If you have symptoms of Covid-19 then please access a **full PCR test** (through 119 or [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) ) and not a lateral flow test – these are not for diagnosis; they are for screening people who do not have symptoms and are not nearly so accurate as the PCR test.

We are constantly reviewing our services and how these are delivered. We understand that many people prefer to see a clinician face to face and will accommodate preferences where we are able to. As more people start to visit our surgeries again it is inevitable that our waiting rooms will become busier so **do please continue to wear a mask or face covering**, chiefly to protect others, especially our vulnerable and elderly patients.

Consider if a telephone consult alone would meet your needs. We plan to continue to offer telephone or video appointments for those who have found them more convenient.

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I am sorry but there are going to be delays. **The situation will get worse before it improves.**

Contrary to some comments I have heard expressed and read on social media, we are not sitting round doing nothing. Everyone is working flat out to help our patients as best we can. As patients ourselves, we all see the other side when we and our friends/ families contact our own practices. It is a national issue.

We will all get through this but it needs effort and understanding on both sides. Please do be polite and support our Patient Care Co-ordinators and the clinician that you see. Thank you for your patience at this difficult time.

Finally, I want to thank all of my staff who are working so hard to help deliver the best service we can for our patients, under immensely challenging circumstances.

Best wishes

Dr Paul Taylor

Executive Partner  
Hanham Health