

Launceston Medical Centre Patient Participation Group (PPG)



What's it like beingA Doctor at Launceston Medical Centre?

The Patient Participation Group (PPG) for Launceston Medical Centre (LMC) is open to anyone and aims to facilitate a two way exchange between patients and LMC and support the work of the centre. We have planned a series of interviews with the staff at LMC to help us in our aims.

This is the second in our series of interviews and follows on from meeting patient advisors at the medical centre. If you missed that interview you can catch it on the medical centre website or the PPG noticeboard inside the medical centre.

Recently we met with a GP and this is what they told us about their role as the Day's Duty GP.

Every morning before the Klinik system and telephone lines open there is a "huddle" where the key members of the team meet, this includes the duty manager, the reception lead, members of the paramedic, mental health and nursing teams alongside the pharmacist. This allows the duty doctors to know how many appointments are available that day - for GPs, paramedics, nurse practitioners, local Pharmacy First, minor injuries etc.

"On the day" requests for appointments is always very high and especially on a Monday morning when more than 300 forms can be received. There can be a marked daily variation, a rainy day can double the number of requests!

There are two Duty Doctors every day and GPs rotate these roles through the week.

- Duty Doctor 1 is the triage doctor for the day and oversees Klinik requests for medical assistance. The system is constantly reprioritising the forms coming in, based on need. Most forms are seen and reviewed within minutes of being received. The doctor may then text or phone a patient back or ask a patient advisor to make an appointment with the relevant practitioner.

- Duty Doctor 2 handles queries from other members of the team supporting the paramedics and the nursing teams, responds to hospital consultants, care home requests, palliative care issues, district nurses and much more. This aim of this role is to avoid GPs who are doing their normal clinics from being interrupted so they can concentrate on seeing patients. This doctor may also be drafted in when there is extreme pressure for GP appointments.

Most of the time all request forms received are seen and triaged on the same day. The urgency of the appointment you are given will depend on the information you provide, whilst balancing the capacity within the practice for appointments. If it is a routine matter, you may be given an appointment some weeks ahead, especially if it is to see a specific doctor. It was stressed that if you need to be seen, you will be seen.

We asked what can patients can do to help?

- If you need a home visit get in touch as early in the day as possible.
- Be as clear and precise as you can about what you want to happen or are worried about. A GP is going to read this form and the better the information you give the easier it is to make sure you get the right response.
- Be open to the response you receive. A GP will review your Klinik form and may determine that the best route is to see an expert professional rather than make you a GP appointment. It is important to make the best use of the other really great services such as the Pharmacy First Service and the Minor Eye Care Service who can offer assessment and treatment helping free up GP appointments.

Some people cannot use Klinik on a particular day for a variety of reasons. We asked what they should do instead. It was stressed that it is always possible to ring and speak with a patient advisor who will assist in taking all the information needed so the patient can be triaged and assessed by the duty doctor. If it is very busy the patient advisor may arrange to call you back to ensure they have enough time to do this.

The Klinik system is constantly being evaluated and results of a recent patient survey are being analysed. Extending the opening hours of the system is being considered (currently 8.30am - 2pm) and it is hoped that in the future the system will always be available for administrative enquires.

We also talked about what a GPs day is like when not acting as a duty doctor

The day is divided up into 15 minute patient appointments and on top of that GPs (including the duty doctors) have to review test results and letters (from consultants etc). There may be 150 test results and up to 50 letters (per doctor, every day) to be reviewed and acted upon as necessary. Any results always go back to the doctor who requested them. It helps the practice if you are requesting results from tests arranged elsewhere, that you make contact with the person who requested the test - ie if it was the consultant or hospital, that you speak with them.

The Medical Centre is a Training Practice, which means it hosts GP registrars, fully qualified doctors who are undergoing advanced training under the supervision of experienced GPs. These registrars are typically in their final year before becoming independent general practitioners. This aspect of the practice plays a crucial role in developing the next generation of GPs. A significant benefit of this program is that several doctors the practice has helped to train are now fully qualified and working at our surgery, greatly supporting recruitment efforts, an area that is often challenging in General Practice.

It is clear to us that the GPs work +12 hour, intense days. They have to make multiple, rapid and important decisions under pressure. It was obvious that they get a huge amount of satisfaction from helping people and enjoy the relationships that they build with patients. Like anyone, they find dealing with conflict hard and take it personally when they can't fulfil a patient's request. The support offered to the staff by Dr Magill's psychosocial team is important in helping manage the stresses and fatigue of the role and stands as an example to other practices.

The PPG are very grateful for the time given to us and continue to be impressed at the dedication and determination of all the team to deliver for patients in our community.

We hope this has given you a further insight into the work of the centre.

If you would like to be part of the Patient Participation Group you can find more information on the medical centre website and also our noticeboard inside the centre.