

CASUALTY – THE REALITY!

Casualty units or, to give them their correct title, Accident and Emergency (A&E) Units, are familiar to most of us, even if we have never needed to use their services. They have long been a popular setting for television dramas. The 'Casualty' series on BBC1 has been running since 1986 and (so far!) there have been almost 900 episodes, but older readers may also remember 'Emergency Ward 10', one of Britain's earliest soaps, a twice-weekly 'must see' broadcast on ITV between 1957 and 1967. Many other dramas have used a similar setting over the years and, if a constant characteristic can be found in all of these, it must surely be that A&E is a very busy place, with apparently endless queues of walking wounded waiting for attention. Anyone who has been obliged to spend time in a working A&E unit will confirm that – at least in this respect – the fictional dramas accurately portray reality.

A&E Units are equipped with a great deal of expensive equipment, and are staffed by highly-trained medical professionals, as they must be if they are to provide the best possible care and treatment to patients in life-threatening situations. Unfortunately, a sizeable proportion of A&E time is expended in attending to patients who do not really need to be there. During our opening hours we can treat most minor ailments and injuries much more cost-effectively – but just as professionally – here at the Surgery. So, next time you have a minor accident or need treatment urgently but the circumstances don't amount to a real emergency, please consider carefully whether you need to attend an A&E Unit. If the Surgery is open, contact us so that we can help you, and leave the A&E staff to devote their expertise and equipment to people who really need it – one of these days that might include you!

ON-LINE SERVICES

You can now book appointments to see your doctor and place orders for repeat prescriptions online. To do this, you need to register at Reception – check below for opening times. When you register, we'll give you all the information you need to get going.

SURGERY OPENING TIMES

Our normal opening times are:

Monday	8.30.am. – 6.00.pm.
Tuesday	8.30.am. – 8.00 .pm.
Wednesday	8.30.am. – 6.00.pm.
Thursday *	8.30.am. – 6.00.pm.
Friday	8.30.am. – 6.00.pm.

*We close for staff training every Thursday lunchtime between 12.00.noon and 1.30.pm.

During the Christmas and New Year holiday period we will be closed on 25 and 26 December and 1 January and will be closed from 4.00.pm. on Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve.

If you need medical assistance when the surgery is closed we have arranged cover. Simply telephone 111; this is not just an out of hours service – you can get help and advice and, if a home visit is needed, you will be seen by a Doctor from Northern Doctors Urgent Care.

If you have a major medical emergency needing an ambulance, you should telephone 999 immediately.

KEEP WARM, KEEP WELL

As we write this Newsletter in mid-December, we are just beginning to feel the rough edge of Winter. The next three months can be a difficult – and sometimes dangerous – time of year.

Cold, both indoors and outdoors, can have a significant impact on your health. Cold weather can play a part in triggering serious health problems, including heart attacks, strokes, pneumonia and depression. Everyone is at risk to some extent, but some groups are especially vulnerable. These include people over 60, people who are disabled, people with long-term health problems such as heart, lung or kidney disease, and people on low incomes who find it difficult to afford adequate heating.

Every Winter, cold weather is identified as a contributory factor in somewhere between twenty five and thirty thousand deaths across the United Kingdom. Millions more suffer from a wide range of illnesses in which the weather plays a part. One of the most effective ways of keeping well in these difficult circumstances is to make sure that you keep yourself warm. With this in mind, we've produced a leaflet which is packed with hints about ways to keep warm. You can pick up a copy at the surgery, or you can contact Reception and ask for a copy to be sent to you by e-mail. If you have a relative, friend or neighbour who is in one of the vulnerable groups mentioned above, why not get an extra copy to pass on to them?

THE CARE DATA SERVICE

The Care Data Service is administered by the Health and Social Care Information Service, and retrieves personal confidential data from GP practices **without** seeking patient consent. This will only happen in specific circumstances; for example, when requested by the Secretary of State or by NHS England, or when required by bodies such as the National Institute for Clinical Excellence or the Care Quality Commission. Data will only be shared when there is a legal basis for doing so, or when there is an overriding public interest in disclosure.

‘Personal confidential data’ includes details of referrals to specialists, NHS prescriptions issued and other clinical information. Your date of birth, postcode, gender and NHS number will also be collected, so that the service can link the GP data with details obtained from other care providers. The service is currently being introduced across the whole of NHS England.

You have the right to opt out of the scheme unless –

- ❖ You are legally obliged to share the information, or
- ❖ There is an overriding public interest in disclosure.

You can find out more about the benefits to be derived from the scheme by visiting www.nhs.uk/caredata, and the possible disadvantages are explained at www.medconfidential.org.

If after considering the available information you are happy to be included in the system, you don't need to take any action. If you wish to opt out you need to do this in writing; you can download a form from our Practice website www.heatonroadsurgery.nhs.uk or pick up a copy from Reception.

VIRTUAL PATIENT GROUP

We're trying to set up a 'virtual' patient group as some people aren't able to attend the meetings of our existing patient's forum. We think that if the Surgery is to become as effective and efficient as it could be, it's very important that as many people as possible can have a say in how we run things. If you would be willing to be part of this group please get in touch with reception to find out more. Don't be confused by the title, it's the *group* that's virtual, because the members won't need to gather together, but it's for real patients, and we'd like lots of you to join!

You don't need any special skills to take part, just a willingness to say what you think about things. You can e-mail us at any time about any thoughts you may have about the Surgery, and sometimes we may send out a circular asking for your views about a particular topic. We'd be delighted to welcome anyone willing to volunteer but, to help us get a balance of opinions reflecting all of our patients, we'd be especially pleased to hear from volunteers in the age group 16 to 45.

NEW FACES

We are pleased to welcome two new members to our Medical Reception Team. Amanda Butcher has previously worked for us on a temporary basis, so she may already be familiar to some of you. Rosalyn Emerson comes to us from Patient Information – that's the NHS department that deals with records for patients who change Practices or need help to find a new GP. We wish them both a long and happy stay at Heaton Road.

DON'T WASTE MEDICATION!

Every year, in England alone, half-a-million tonnes of waste medication is handed in at pharmacies for safe disposal. This level of wastage costs the NHS £100,000,000 – that's right, **one hundred million pounds!** – every year. It's impossible to eliminate all wastage, but we should all do what we can to reduce the total. If you are among those who need regular repeat prescriptions, please follow these simple rules:

- Always check how much of each medication you have on hand before calling the surgery.
- Don't re-order any items you don't yet need or are no longer taking.
- Always be sure to have your current medication list (the tear off sheet from your *last* prescription) with you when you place your order.

If we all do our bit, we **can** make a difference.

NHS NUMBERS

Guided by recent research, the National Patient Safety Agency has concluded that extended use of NHS numbers (shown on your Medical Card) will significantly improve the care and safety of patients. We include your NHS number on referral letters and other correspondence, and in the longer term you may be asked for your NHS number when dealing with your GP or with Hospital or other NHS services. We'll keep you informed of developments.

HEATON ROAD HEALTH TIP No.2

This is the time of year when the Winter Vomiting Bug is most common. [Norovirus](#), to give it its medical name, is highly contagious and often spreads through places like hotels and schools. The illness is pretty unpleasant, but is normally over within a couple of days. There's no cure, so there's no point in seeing a doctor but, as with any illness causing vomiting and diarrhoea it's very important to drink plenty of fluids to avoid dehydration. The risk of dehydration can be reduced by drinking specially-formulated rehydration fluids, which are available over the counter at your local pharmacy.