

## A day in the life of a GP

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### Normal surgery hours

Monday to Thursday	
Morning	8.30 – 10.40
Afternoon	15.30 – 17.30
Friday	
Morning	8.30 – 10.40
Afternoon	15.10 – 17.10

### Reception opening hours

Histon	8.00 – 13.00 and 14.00 – 18.00
Cottenham	8.00 – 12.00 and 14.00 – 18.00

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Join our Virtual Patient Group to receive updates and be notified when our newsletter is available. Register on our surgery website or at reception.

The first scheduled appointment of the day for the GPs is at 8.30am. However, this is not the start of the working day for many of us. Several doctors come in shortly after 7am either to check results, do administrative tasks or offer "extended hours" appointments. Others, like myself, are working parents and have done an hour or so of school drop-offs before arriving at the surgery, coffee in hand!

Our booked surgeries are a mixture of pre-booked appointments and book on the day slots. One of us is identified each day as the "duty doctor". Most of this doctor's appointments will be released on that morning. The duty doctor is also the first point of contact for receptionists, nurses and other staff for acute problems. We receive many phone calls each morning that need to be triaged (i.e. assessed to determine how urgent the situation is). These are not just from concerned patients but also from relatives, colleagues in local hospitals and also community staff (including district nurses). Urgent abnormal blood results are phoned through during the day and an unexpected death of one of our patients triggers a call from the coroner who will need information about the patient's medical history. Our last pre-booked appointment finishes at 11am. The pre-booked appointments are for ten minutes but inevitably, at times, this is insufficient. Many patients have several ongoing conditions that need reviewing or have "saved up a list". I try very hard to balance the need to cover all the medical issues of the current patient, with the inconvenience and annoyance of the next patient who is kept waiting if I run late. Most patients are very considerate and are aware of the limitations of the time slot. Others realise that this is the nature of the job and are happy to wait, knowing that when they need that little bit more time, they will get it. It's not always easy to get this balance right!

We will then schedule to see any patient who feels that their condition is urgent and who needs to be seen that day. Patients are invited to come from 11am and will be seen by the doctors working that morning when they have finished morning surgery. The numbers vary hugely – from none to more than 30! We realise how frustrating it is to have to wait to be seen and in the past we have invited everyone down at the same time. We have just changed to a system which allots each patient a five minute arrival slot and will review this later in the year.

When the urgent, extra patients have been seen, we then have medicals to do. These are scheduled for a variety of reasons and include adoption applications and HGV licence applications. Following this, most of us then have individual phone calls to make. Patients ring to discuss results, progress of a medical condition or a concern about their health that may need investigating. The number of phone queries has increased significantly over the last few years and produces more than an hour of work for most of us each day on top of face to face consultations.

Written by  
Dr. Emma Baldwin



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Usually this first part of the day is finished by 1–1.30pm and we then meet together to look through all the post, sort out prescription queries and discuss hospital referrals. We try and discuss these to optimise care and make sure that our patients are seen by the most appropriate service.

We look through visit requests and divide them up between the doctors that are working that day. On average we each visit three to four homes each day.

We do, however care for the residents in several large nursing homes and there may be 10 to 15 patients need assessing and reviewing each visit. Sometimes it is a struggle to get back in time for the start of afternoon surgery (3.30pm). On organised days, we remember to bring lunch with us but on others we are lucky to have local sandwich shops and Tesco's to refuel us!



We have lunchtime meetings several times each week. These are to meet with district nurses, our practice nurses, health visitors and community colleagues. Due to the visiting constraints it can sometimes be hard to get there for the start. We also have educational meetings that are organised by ourselves, and sometimes organise external speakers (for example a local consultant).

Scheduled afternoon surgery finishes at 5.40pm. We do try and see acute problems in the morning because more services and investigations are available if needed. We have appointments in the afternoon that are released at 2pm but if these are insufficient in number for urgent demand we will stay on after surgery to see patients who are acutely unwell. Once the last patient has left, most of us spend an hour or so going through results, dictating letters and contacting patients regarding letters we have received about their care. Sometimes I need to get home for family reasons (parents' evening etc.) and don't have that hour to give at 7pm, so I will come in on my day off or weekends to finish off all the tasks. Other doctors will stay late to offer "extended hours" evening appointments and also appointments on Saturday mornings.

Those of us who are partners have extra responsibilities as employers and have additional (often evening) meetings regarding the running of the business. These include finance and budget meetings, meetings with our accountant and meetings concerning the maintenance of the premises. Many patients are unaware that GPs are self-employed and not paid directly by the government. Running the business side of the surgery can be very time-consuming in addition to patient care.

I do feel extremely privileged to be working in this wonderful community. As in many jobs, the workload can seem overwhelming at times, and the NHS is struggling to cope with the resources it has been given. We have wonderful patients who are committed to supporting the surgery and a hard working team based at the Firs. I read in the newspapers about difficulties that other GPs experience and feel very fortunate. I certainly would never consider working anywhere else!

### **Carers Surgery of the Month**

We are very proud to have been awarded Carer Surgery of the Month in February 2014. The practice is working hard to build up a carer register. Do you look after a friend, relative, partner or neighbour who is ill, frail or has a disability? If so please register with us so we can offer services to you such as:

- Carer Newsletter and Support Directory
- Carers Free Prescription for short breaks
- Help to make an emergency plan
- Training for carers

Our carer lead is Chelsea Holman (pictured receiving flowers from Crossroads for the Practice achieving Carers Surgery of the Month). For further details call Chelsea on 01223 234286 or email [Chelsea.holman@nhs.net](mailto:Chelsea.holman@nhs.net). You can also register on our website or with our reception team.



# One in 3 women who get breast cancer are over 70 so don't assume you are past it.

## ... About Breast Cancer

Breast cancer is the most common cancer in England with around 41,500 women diagnosed each year. The older you are the more likely you are to get it – one in three women who get breast cancer is aged 70 and over. If breast cancer is detected early, it is more treatable. Finding it early could save your life.

## ... About How to Spot It

It is important to get to know how your breasts look and feel normally, so that you'll find it easier to spot something unusual. Get into the habit of checking your breasts regularly. Feel the whole of both breasts and your armpits. Does anything seem different? Look at your breasts in the mirror. Do they appear to have changed at all? If so, it is worth getting checked out.

Possible signs of breast cancer include:

- A lump in your breast or armpit
- Nipple changes
- Changes to the skin of your breast
- Changes in the shape or size of your breast
- Pain in your breast or armpit



If you notice any of these changes contact the surgery straight away. You are not wasting anyone's time and it's much better to be sure, if only to put your mind at rest. Finding breast cancer early makes it more treatable, a trip to the surgery could save your life.

## .... About Breast Screening

Women between the ages of 50 and 70 are currently invited for screening, which can detect the condition at an early stage. The screening programme is gradually extending to include everyone aged 57–73 but this has not happened yet. If you are over 70, you can ask for a free screening every three years. Just get in touch with the local breast-screening unit to make an appointment – Cambridge Breast Unit, Addenbrooke's Hospital, tel: 01223 217627

## .... About how to reduce your chances of getting breast cancer

**Maintain a healthy weight** – Keeping a healthy body weight is a great way to reduce your risk of cancer. Try to eat at least 5 portions of fruit and vegetables a day, whether frozen, fresh or tinned.

**Cut Down on Alcohol** – Drinking too much can lead to a number of health problems and is linked to breast cancer, by reducing you will reduce your health risks.

**Look after yourself** – Keeping active, swimming or cycling are good ways to stay fit if you can manage these. Or go to dancing or try yoga – the more you can do, the better. Even walking to your local shops instead of taking the car can make a difference.

If you are unclear on anything visit [www.nhs.uk/breastcancer70](http://www.nhs.uk/breastcancer70) or to talk in confidence about cancer, call Cancer Research UK's information nurses on 0808 800 4040. If you are unclear on anything visit [www.NHS.uk/breastcancer70](http://www.NHS.uk/breastcancer70)

Links to more information can be found on our website [www.firshouse.com](http://www.firshouse.com) and on NHS Choices [www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Cancer-of-the-breast-female/Pages/Introduction.aspx4](http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Cancer-of-the-breast-female/Pages/Introduction.aspx4)

**Remember:** Finding breast cancer early makes it more treatable, don't delay in coming in to see your GP.

## Online Services/SMS

We would like as many patients as possible to register for online services so that you can order prescriptions, book or cancel appointments and change your contact details online. This is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. We would also like SMS and email consent so that we can send you appointment reminders, contact you if we need you to come in for a review, and send you your hospital appointment when we refer you to the hospital. You can register for all of these things by visiting reception or via the practice web site.

## Histon Day Centre

Histon day centre is the place to find community friendship and good food. The centre runs on Tuesday and Friday 10am – 2.30pm. For £5 you are collected from and taken back home and can enjoy a home-cooked lunch and tea and biscuits. The centre provides entertainment, celebrations and the occasional outing. For further details please call the surgery.

**Weigh to Go** is a successful weight loss programme for Adults over 18 years with a BMI over 30. This is available at your GP Practice, free of charge.

One-to-one consultations could help you:

- Balance the types of foods you eat
- Reduce your tendency to over eat
- Become more physically active and have more energy and vitality
- Change eating patterns and maintain weight loss
- Learn strategies to avoid boredom & stress eating
- Avoid Type 2 Diabetes or Pre-Diabetes
- Reduce blood pressure
- Improve blood cholesterol
- Improve sleep and reduce snoring
- Improve mobility and painful joints

To find out more speak to your practice nurse/GP or email [CCS-TR.w2go@nhs.net](mailto:CCS-TR.w2go@nhs.net)



## Patient Survey Results / Patient Feedback

The latest patient survey results have now been published on our web site and are available in hard copy from reception.

In April 2014 we are adding a new section to our web site where the surgery responds to suggestions and comments from the latest survey.



Telegraph Street Patient Group and Cottenham Community Centre are pleased to offer free Heartstart training, provided through the British Heart Foundation **on Saturday 26th April 10.00 – 12 noon, Main Hall, Cottenham Community Centre.**

Heartstart training teaches you what to do in a life-threatening emergency. There are around 60,000 out-of-hospital cardiac arrests in the UK every year. The course is suitable for all ages and covers a range of Emergency Life Support Skills including:

- dealing with an unconscious casualty
- cardiac arrest
- suspected heart attack
- choking
- serious bleeding.

Pre-booking is essential, as numbers are strictly limited. A small charge of £2.50 to cover light refreshments is payable on booking. Book your place at Telegraph Street Surgery or the CCC Coffee Shop.

## Patient Participation Group

If you would be interested in joining our PPG please call the practice and speak to Helen Wiseman (Practice Manager) and she will arrange for our PPG Chair Fei Ni Toole to contact you.

## Clinical Governance Half-Day Closures

The Surgery closes for occasional half days to enable staff to concentrate on development and training. Cottenham surgery will close from noon and Histon from 1.00pm on Thursdays 17<sup>th</sup> July, 18<sup>th</sup> September and 18<sup>th</sup> December 2014. If you require a doctor urgently during this time please call the surgery number or 111.