



# *On the Ridge....(No 29)*

*April/May 2020 Online Newsletter  
from the Ridgeway Surgery Patient Group*



**Dr Lloyd's retirement? Here he is —  
running Harrow's Hot Hub Covid Testing Centre!**

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## **RSPG News**

At this time life is so different for all of us. As you know RSPG was only able to host one farewell evening to mark Dr Lloyd's retirement. Although we have lots of photos of that event we are holding on to them because we hope to be able to hold a second evening once the current crisis is over. Our AGM, usually held in April was of course postponed and Dr Lloyd was due to be our speaker. Again, we hope that that event too will be held in due course.

### ***So what is your committee doing now?***

We are having regular "virtual" meetings with 2 of The Ridgeway's doctors, the practice manager and the practice coordinator. They share information with us on how the practice is still providing a service as best they can in this difficult time. For our part, as ordinary patients we are updating them about our experience of the lock down, discussing what sources of help that we are aware of in the community and highlighting gaps. Later in this newsletter you will find some examples of such local initiatives set up by neighbours. Using our help, these have been put together by one of the doctors. In this way we hope that they will give you ideas of how to set up support for each other if there is a similar need where you live.

We do need to hear from you if there are issues that you would like us to raise with our surgery. The practice really does want this feedback.

Harrow's "Hot Hub" at the Alex is working under the direction of Dr Lloyd—a far cry from his retirement! The Hub is able to see up to 48 patients every day who have been referred by GPs or 111. These patients either have or known suspected Covid-19 and may need an examination. From there if necessary, they are referred on to Northwick Park Hospital. The Hub is also seeing keyworkers and their families who need COVID-19 swab to test if they are infective. So for the time being this means that there is no branch surgery at the Alex.

Our last Newsletter referred to video consultations instead of face to face ones. Then we saw it as something that would become part of General Practice in the not too distant future. Little did we know how soon this would become a reality! More and more aspects of all our lives depend on being able to use iPhones, iPads or computers. If this current crisis has taught us anything it is how essential it is for all of us to be able to use these devices. Older people do need to ask younger family members for help to get to grips with such technology. Already many of us are keeping in touch with our children and grandchildren through "Facetime", Skype or "Zoom" to name just a few examples. This way of being in touch really is here to stay. We miss out on so much that keeps our spirits up if we do not use our youngsters to help us to meet this challenge.

Technology also helps us to make requests for our medication. Registering with the surgery for online access is a direct, safe and straightforward way to do this.

**Shivani Dhrona**, Practice Coordinator at The Ridgeway is only too willing to help to set this up for patients so they are able to use the website below: -

<https://patientaccess.com>

A new service called **e-Consult** will be available on the surgery website in early May—see under **Surgery Matters**. This will offer a range of advice and let you email a less urgent email query to a doctor who will then respond by email.

### *Surgery Matters*

**Practice Manager, Andy Slater writes:** Dear patients,

We know that all of our lives have been transformed by the coronavirus pandemic and we are aware that many of our patients may have not raised more “routine” matters with us since the start of the pandemic. However we are here to help with all usual matters even though the way we deal with them may be different.

We have also expanded our video, phone and email communication and from May 11th you can use our website to initiate electronic consultations with us. Please stay up to date by looking at our website and our text messages and do not feel that you are over burdening by sharing your health problems / concerns.

**Keeping an eye on your Blood Pressure :** At present you cannot come to the surgery to do a check but you can monitor this at home. Blood pressure monitors which fit on your upper arm are no longer very expensive. Have a look at the 2 makes used by the surgery. These are **Omron** and **A & D** but there are other British and Irish Hypertension Society approved ones too.

Remember that you must not share these between households at this time as the virus can remain active on surfaces for 72 hours.

Keep a record of your blood pressure readings so that they are ready for your next review which could of course be by phone.

Simple advice on home monitoring may be found at: -

<http://www.bloodpressureuk.org/BloodPressureandyou/Thebasics/Homemonitoring> It is also a useful gateway to the whole site.

**Hypertension:** Again a useful website for advice and support for patients is:

<http://www.bloodpressureuk.org/Home>

#### **Diabetes:**

Diabetes UK for advice

<https://www.diabetes.org.uk/about-us/news/coronavirus>

Some yummy recipes

<https://www.bbcgoodfood.com/recipes/collection/diabetes>

Learn all about managing diabetes well in the learning zone

<https://learningzone.diabetes.org.uk>

Several Diabetes Apps such as Diabetes Pal

## *Covid 19—is there a silver lining?*

We are staying away from shops so less opportunity to buy chocolates and cigarettes. Might that lead to a concerted effort to eat more healthily or to give up smoking? Certainly one of The Ridgeway's doctors has expressed the hope that this might happen! Also, as we are only permitted to go out for exercise once each day it has become a more valued activity for all thus encouraging another aspect of healthy living. At home many of us have discovered books that we had always wanted to read but somehow just didn't get round to doing this. Losing ourselves in a good book holds out an enjoyable and stimulating way of spending this time of isolation. So much is also being made available to us for free on television such as lots more films, recordings of concerts, plays from the National Theatre and the possibility of exploring a range of museums, art galleries and gardens.

Being apart from other close family members is making even the most reluctant of us find out more about the digital ways of keeping in touch through free software programmes such as Zoom and Facetime. The helping hand offered by neighbours and local organisations has strengthened fellow feeling whilst not denying the need to be on our guard for scams and for those who will always try to take advantage of the vulnerable and of unusual situations. In this respect the publicity sent out by our neighbourhood police teams is a powerful reminder as is the information from the surgery and the council on where to find mental health support.

On a societal level there are changes too. If there was any doubt about the need to value and properly resource our health and local government services, it no longer exists. Hopefully a real change of direction will take place when the current crisis is over. These circumstances have also led to the provision of accommodation for homeless people sleeping rough on the streets and it will give some the encouragement to enjoy having a roof over their head for perhaps the first time in years.

Maybe even help them to turn their lives around.

Climate change too is being given a boost as we all travel less and the pollution levels have gone down as a result. Individually we are spending less on petrol and often discovering local beauty spots within walking distance of our homes.



**We have been here before .....see below: -**

History repeats itself. Came across this poem written in 1869, reprinted during 1919 Pandemic.

This is Timeless....

And people stayed at home  
And read books  
And listened  
And they rested  
And did exercises  
And made art and played  
And learned new ways of being  
And stopped and listened  
More deeply  
Someone meditated, someone prayed  
Someone met their shadow  
And people began to think differently  
And people healed.  
And in the absence of people who  
Lived in ignorant ways  
Dangerous, meaningless and heartless,  
The earth also began to heal  
And when the danger ended and  
People found themselves  
They grieved for the dead  
And made new choices  
And dreamed of new visions  
And created new ways of living  
And completely healed the earth  
Just as they were healed.



**RSPG always welcomes your comments & suggestions.  
So do please get in touch on: [rspatientgroup.com](http://rspatientgroup.com)**

## Why sleep matters & the link between anxiety and insomnia

Most people don't get enough sleep and some of us belong to a society that burns the candle at both ends, a nation where people stay up all night to study, work or have fun. However, to go without adequate sleep carries with it both short and long term consequences. In the short term a lack of adequate sleep can affect judgement, mood, ability to learn and retain information, and may increase the risks of accident and serious injury. In the long term chronic sleep deprivation may lead to many health problems including heart attack, stroke and type 2 diabetes.

Not being able to sleep whether it's not being able to fall asleep or waking up during the night is incredibly frustrating—but the feeling of anxiety that goes with it can be very frustrating too. Insomnia is often attributed to anxiety because many of us brood on worries in the quiet of the night. As already noted sleeplessness makes us exhausted, irritable and unable to concentrate and this makes anxiety during the day worse.



### ***So what is the link between the two and which triggers the other?***

Professor Kevin Morgan of the university of Loughborough's Clinical Sleep Research Unit explains this link. "Anxiety in a generalised sense creates what we will refer to as arousal, excitement or alertness. If you go to bed intending to sleep but you are anxious it doesn't really matter what you pin that anxiety to. You have already reduced your chances of falling asleep effectively." This arousal is triggered by the "fight or flight" response which releases the stress hormones cortisol and adrenaline preventing you from falling asleep. Both anxiety and stress release similar hormones. We think that getting to sleep and, for example going back to sleep after going to the toilet in the night, are different but basically they are the same when it comes to anxiety. For those of us with day time commitments not being able to go to sleep gives rise to particular anxiety called the "Vicious cycle of insomnia".

### ***Common causes of anxiety and some ideas on how to deal with them.***

News related anxiety: - Worry about politics, crime, natural disasters and now Covid 19 are just a few topics which can generate anxiety especially in this world of 24/7 updates on the news. Dr Sharie Coombes, neuropsychologist thinks that avoiding the news altogether is not helpful but a more gentle and controlled approach could be. For example keeping an eye on the headlines rather than exploring in depth the issues that make you anxious gives more control. Also, choose a news outlet that is more reliable and less sensational too. If you are someone who finds themselves

continuing to dwell on such matters it is important to give your mind a rest. Deliberately diverting your attention by going for a walk, chatting on the phone to a friend or playing with the kids are useful ways of breaking this cycle. If you still feel that your anxiety is overwhelming one way to deal with it is to give yourself "worry time". Dr Coombes advice is this; "Decide on a time of day when you can devote all your time to worrying about the problem. Then sit and worry for a full 10 minutes." You may find your brain getting bored but this is the whole idea as after a while your brain will feel it has focused on that subject enough. "It's important to be disciplined about it and set yourself a task to do at the end of 10 minutes so there is a cut off point."

Anxiety is a common mental health issue and tackling it can be the first step to sleeping better. This might mean trying self help techniques such as mindfulness, talking treatments, cognitive behavioural therapy or medication. Your GP can point you in the right direction to find the best treatment for you.

Spotting anxiety in kids: - As adults we can usually recognize bodily sensations and thoughts that come with anxiety, however, it can be harder for the younger children to know exactly what they are feeling. They will often know that something isn't right but will channel it into a physical symptom such as a "tummy ache" or say they are feeling very tired. Whilst it can be easy to dismiss such behaviour as attention seeking or playing-up remember that behaviour is a form of communication and it is important to let your child know that you have noticed that things are not quite right. Remember that anxiety in children is very common and often an understandable reaction to the uncertainties and challenges of growing up. Most children respond well to support from us as parents and even if they do need more specialised help for a time, it doesn't mean that they will continue to struggle with this problem throughout their life.

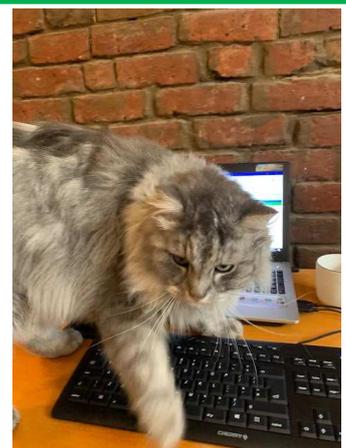
**Taken from :** 1. [healthysleep.med.harvard.edu/healthy/matters/consequences](http://healthysleep.med.harvard.edu/healthy/matters/consequences)  
2. [patient.info/the-link-between-anxiety-and-insomnia](http://patient.info/the-link-between-anxiety-and-insomnia)  
3. [patient.info/news-and-features-how-to-spot-the-signs-of-anxiety-in-kids](http://patient.info/news-and-features-how-to-spot-the-signs-of-anxiety-in-kids)

### **Working from home?**

**But Puss has other ideas for your keyboard** →

- Coffee
- Walk
- Relax

↑ **My "to do" list**



## Some local initiatives

In some streets neighbours have set up support groups to help each other with shopping, collecting medicines and combatting isolation. Below are a couple of examples of how this was done in a safe way. You might want to do this too.

A patient writes: I live in a road comprising 62 houses. Some weeks ago at a time when the public's awareness of COVID-19 was spiralling, I, along with two close neighbours, decided it was time to reach-out to our fellow residents. Initially our main purpose was to identify those who may have been required to self-isolate and therefore be less able to go about some of their everyday activities

First and to improve communication, we began to increase the number of residents with access to the street's **Whatsapp** Group. Now we have 56 houses that are included in the group and we communicate with them on a regular basis. In order to recognise neighbours in the future, members of the group were encouraged to add their photograph to their profile. We also ensure that similar messages are given to those not in the group by delivering copies through their respective letterboxes to be read safely after 72 hours.

The next stage was the identification of volunteers and this was very successful to the extent that we had and still have the corresponding number of houses where support is required so matching demand with supply was quite simple. We check on a regular basis that the arrangements in place still work to everyone's satisfaction and I am pleased to say that they do.

We are of course aware that it is not all about practicalities as a number of residents are alone and may be struggling with other aspects of their life and we hope to keep in touch with them by phone.

Finally and in the longer term, I believe that what we have set up has created a significantly better spirit in our street and that even when restrictions are lifted many of us will be friends as well as neighbours.

Another patient writes: Our group consists of about 90 houses across 3 streets. It is Moderated and Administered (this means that only known people may join and that no inappropriate messages may be sent). Some useful ideas for others are: -

1. Shopping for neighbours including shielded families (eg: multi organ transplant, cardiac issues, recovering stroke patients)
2. Sharing grocery delivery services. Note : None of the big supermarkets (such as Tesco, Morrisons, Ocado) are taking new customers. Delivery slots are not readily available and quickly fill up when released, so makes sense if someone already has a slot to share it more widely.
3. Making others aware when delivery slots are released " Tesco have delivery slots on xyz date" so others can book the slots before they get filled up.
4. Collecting medicines for neighbours from local pharmacies.
5. Where people have Milk delivered to their doorstep , neighbours ask them to include their requirements. (yes that service is still available, but they are not taking new customers).

## **Domestic Abuse & the Lock down**



Reports of domestic abuse have increased by 25% since the lock down began, so would you know how to find help in those circumstances? These are tips for people who are experiencing domestic abuse while in isolation with a perpetrator.

If you are in immediate danger, always call 999.

If you are looking for further information or support, call the 24-hr National Domestic Abuse Helpline on 0808 2000 247

Government guidance around the spread of coronavirus has meant that Britain is on lockdown. For people experiencing domestic abuse and isolated at home with their perpetrator, this could be a dangerous time as many opportunities for intervention have diminished. However, support services remain open. Here are six tips for keeping safe if you're isolated with an abusive partner. **(See more from Hestia)**

### **1. Know that support is available**

Many support services and helpline services remain operational and here are some helplines that you can contact if it is safe to do so.

The Freephone 24 hour National Abuse Helpline (England): 0808 2000 247

Respect, Men's Advice Line , open Monday to Friday 9.00 to 17.00: 0808 801 0327

Mankind Initiative Helpline, open Monday to Friday 10.00 to 16.00: 01823 334244

Galop's LGPT+ Helpline, open Monday, Tuesday and Friday 10.00 to 17.00.

Wednesday and Thursday 10.00 to 20.00: 0800 999 5428

### **2. Download the Bright Sky app**

If it is safe to do so, download the free Bright Sky app<sup>i</sup> from your app store.

Hestia provides a free mobile app, Bright Sky which provides support and information to anyone who may be in an abusive relationship or those concerned about someone they know.

### **3. Keep your phone on as much as possible**

If you are in immediate danger, always call 999. The police are waiting for your call.

The Silent Solution system can help if you are unable to speak on a 999 call. If you call and don't say anything, you will be put through to the Silent Solution system.

Then, if you press 55, the call will be logged as an emergency and police will respond as such.

### **4. Stay safe online**

We know that abusers may monitor channels of communication. If it is safe for you to do so have a look at **Chayn's Online Safety Guide** with tips on how to set up secure passwords, alter the privacy settings online on your internet browser and more.

### **5. Keep as connected as possible**

Where appropriate and safe to do so, create a safety word or signal with a loved one so that they will know you are in danger or need support.

### **6. Have a safety plan**

Women's Aid has a list for you to consider. **Taken from:** Hestia, life beyond crisis

## Sources of useful advice & support in Harrow

### **Emergency Dental Care?**

Check out <https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/find-a-dentist>

### **Mental Health support:**

For anyone who is struggling with their mental health at this current time - Harrow Talking Therapies is a FREE NHS service offering support to those who are finding the current situation difficult. They offer 1:1 support via telephone or Video call including bereavement support, anxiety and worry management support, low mood support. They also help if you are self-isolating, or feel isolated because of being on your own at this time. So there is support with this too.

Get in touch by phone on **0208 515 5015** or email [harrow.iapt@nhs.net](mailto:harrow.iapt@nhs.net)



### **Harrow Council Website:**

This site is regularly updated and has details of a range of support available to businesses and individual residents.

There have been over 5,000 food deliveries so far across Harrow.

See [www.helpharrow.org](http://www.helpharrow.org) They will take direct food requests from Harrow residents.

There is also a hot line telephone number for anyone in need of assistance as a result of Covid. The number is **0208 901 2698**

See also the **Staying Safe** section headed **Adult Social Care**.

### **Coronavirus Scams:**

The Government are advising the public to be extra vigilant and be wary of scams related to Covid-19, please read the Government's guidance here - <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/be-vigilant-against-coronavirus-scams>

See also Met Police "**Little Booklet of Phone Scams**"