

RSPG Chair's Report: November 2021

This report covers the period from June 2020 to November 2021. Originally we had hoped to hold our AGM as usual in April 2020 but, as with so many "usual events", Covid changed everything.

From March 2020 to September of this year your committee met fortnightly using Zoom with Andy Slater, Practice Manager, Shivani Dhrona, Deputy Practice Manager and Dr Clare Etherington, one of Ridgeway's long-standing GPs. Quite a change as in the past we met about 8 times per year!. Our pattern has just changed again, and we are now meeting every 4 weeks. Over this same period whenever there were any wider health developments other doctors joined us to help to keep us up to date with such changes. We were also introduced to the new health care professionals who are now part of Ridgeway's team.

I am sure that as patients you will be aware of the current widespread criticism of General Practice. Much of this is focused on the loss of many face to face appointments not just during the height of the pandemic but continuing now too. There is also dissatisfaction with the triage system, which was introduced before Covid, and which is likely to remain for the foreseeable future. In medicine "Triage" is a practice used when care cannot be provided because there are not enough resources. The process rations care towards those who are most in need of immediate care, and who benefit most from it. More generally it refers to prioritisation of medical care. In other words, there are not enough doctors. This is a national shortage. It existed before Covid and has become even worse during the pandemic. At the same time some of us patients got sicker, but we were reluctant to see our doctors. There was worry about infection, plus we were hearing how stretched services had become. It is against this background that your committee have continued to try to represent patient concerns whilst not ignoring the reality of the current situation.

Throughout this period, we have seen that Ridgeway staff remained committed to providing the best possible health care under the most demanding of circumstances. The latest patient newsletter gives more detail about our recent discussions with the surgery, and we have asked Dr Lloyd to talk at this AGM about how the range of staff at Ridgeway is reshaping to try to meet our health care needs. We have also asked him to tell us what Ridgeway needs from us patients to make the best use of the health care available.

Please remember that we represent your voice as patients of The Ridgeway. Our ability to do this depends more than ever currently on you keeping us in touch with your interests and concerns.

Areas of our activity since June 2020: -

1. Evening talks using Zoom:

- August 2020 Diabetic patients & catching up on reviews suspended during lockdown
- September 2020 Latest research into Prostate Cancer
- December 2020 Healthy Living in the time of Covid & beyond
- April 2021 Covid and our Mental Health

Slides from all these talks are available. Please email rspatientgroup@hotmail.com if you would like copies.

2. Events:

- Dr Lloyd's initial planned retirement meetings with patients: RSPG hosted the first of these at the Baptist Church Hall in Rayners Lane. In the event of course he did not retire. Instead, he set up and continues to manage Harrow's Covid Testing Centre at the Alex. Despite this change of plan many patients managed to sign his leaving book and fill it with personal reminiscences. Later the committee presented him with the book and invited him to become our Life President which he accepted. The Just Giving page which we set up to mark his retirement raised with your help £5,447 for his chosen charity, "Re-cycle" (bicycles to Africa).

- Fund raising for Macmillan: The pandemic prevented us from holding our usual coffee morning in September 2020, so we set up a Just Giving page instead and raised £843.00.
In September of this year with the help of St Alban Church and good weather we held this event in the grounds in front of the church and the amount raised was £1,193.75. This includes additional donations on our Just Giving page.
- Publications: From May 2020 we have produced 4 Newsletters. Unfortunately, all have had to be online and only available on the surgery website. We have been advised that this is still safer from an infection point of view than producing and distributing a printed version as well as an online one.
- Supporting local health charities: Money saved from newsletter printing costs has been donated to help stretched local health charities. A list of charities receiving our donations is available on request.

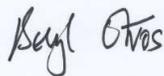
2. Recruitment of non-medical patient volunteers:

The committee together with the surgery asked for patient volunteers to give their time at Tithe Farm to support the vaccination rollout. In the first 4 weeks we recruited 166 patient volunteers and from January until April of this year we put together the daily rotas in collaboration with 2 other surgeries who were also taking part. A committee member designed a “thank you” card which was printed and sent to all our volunteers at the end of this period. Another committee member and some volunteers continue to support a local pharmacy with the continuing vaccination programme. Recently we supported the surgery with their rollout of the flu vaccine.

3. Equipment purchased for the surgery

- A few Blood Pressure monitors for patients unable to afford to buy one
- Ankle Brachial Pressure Index to measure Peripheral Arterial Disease

4. Patient representation in Ridgeway’s interview process: Dr Walton, a long standing member of Ridgeway surgery retired in September 2020. Patients were represented in the process to fill his post with a committee member being invited to take part.



Chair, RSPG