

# GENERAL PRACTICE

Information on the current situation

*Dr Michael Wong, May 2016*

## LET'S BE HONEST HERE...

- Yes, there is a problem with General Practice
- We cannot hide it any longer
- **And no, it is not just us**
- It is a national issue
- The whole system (the NHS) is broken, but it is only being held together through the dedication of its workers

## YOU MAY HAVE SEEN...

- David Cameron's manifesto push for 7 day service
- Junior Doctors' fight for a safe working practices
- GP surgeries closing all around the country
- Finally an admission from politicians that there is a crisis in General Practice, previously denied for a decade
- Press releases on 'funding' promised for General Practice

## WHY IS THERE A CRISIS?

- Workload reasons
- Society reasons
- Political reasons

# WORKLOAD REASONS

- 70 million more consultations in last 5 years
  - GPs see over 1 million patients every day
  - Largest increase in volume of care in any part of the NHS (up 25%)
- Not matched with any increase in staff or resources
  - Actually there has been a drop in proportion of NHS spend from 11% to 8%
- Proportion of doctors who are GPs dropped from 36% to 25%

# SOCIETY REASONS

- People have less tolerance for things going wrong
- Reduced ability to self-care and recover naturally
- Demand has increased
- People want instant results
- Loss of large, caring family groups that supported each other

# POLITICAL REASONS

- Politicians make promises for votes but these promises are not matched with additional resources
  - No additional funding for 7 day working (an increase in opening hours of 40%)
- Constant reorganisation of the NHS
  - GP time taken out of patient contact to constantly reorganise
- Poor working environment affects recruitment and retention

# BUT I CAN'T GET IN!

- **Why is it so difficult to get an appointment?  
I'm going to complain!**
- We know, but if you want to know the reasons why things are difficult, we need to tell you more about General Practice first

## HOW GP WORKS

- Each practice gets a set amount of money to provide care for one patient for one whole year
- From this amount we pay all heating, lighting, staff wages and equipment costs and anything to do with patient care
- Any money left over is shared between partners who own the business

## SOUNDS EASY?

- We receive £143 per patient per year
- This equates to just **56½p** funding per patient per working day (£2.75 per week)
- For this, patients see us as many times as they need, including telephone calls, home visits
- For this, we don't just aim to provide low-rate service, we aim to provide high quality and safe clinical care

## HOW THIS COMPARES

- **£143 is the cost of medical care for you for one year**
- £150 is the price of the cheapest 4G phone contract
- £170 is a trip to the cinema every fortnight
- £240 is the cost of a basic Sky TV package
- £339 is the average cost to insure your dog

## 56½P DOESN'T GO FAR

- Funding only pays enough for patients to see us twice a year
- On average, everyone sees us six times a year
- Some patients see us 200 times or more each year!
- The more we see you, the less effective as a business we are
  - It's not like a shop, where the more customers and 'business' we get, the more successful we become
  - It's not like a shop, where we have 'spare' staff in a back, whom we can bring out to serve more customers if it gets busy - everyone is already working to full capacity

# TALKING ABOUT SHOPS...

- The government want us to open all hours, like, say a shop called *Tesburys*
- If *Tesburys* worked like General Practice then:
- You would give *Tesburys* £3,000 a year (this is the average spend on grocery shopping in Midlands)
- And you could not only get as much *Tesburys Supreme\** as you liked, but also go as many times as you wanted (if you could survive the scrums that is)
- We are sure *Tesburys* would go bust within a week
- But General Practice works like this every single day

# WHY NO APPOINTMENTS?

- Now that is why you cannot get an appointment
- Demand is not being matched by resources, funding or staffing
- Appointments are being used up more quickly than we can provide them despite working flat out
  - Cases are complex, time-consuming and need repeated review
  - Lots of patients being seen with conditions that will get better with self-care
- Fewer doctors are available - no-one wants to be a GP!

# THE WORK OF A GP

- Workload increased - 12-14 hour days are typical
- Intensity and complexity increased
- More paperwork, box-ticking, admin
- More targets, scrutiny and inspections
- Less time to do job well
- Financial pressures and businesses becoming untenable
- Fewer doctors are becoming GPs and existing GPs are leaving

# TYPICAL DAY FOR A GP

- 35-40 face to face appointments (could increase to 60 or more on a duty day)
- 10 phone calls (could increase to 30-40 on duty day)
- 50 clinic letters to read, highlight and action
- 60 lab results to action
- 25 tasks (review medication, phone patients, complete forms, sick notes)
- 1-2 admin forms (insurances, medicals, travel cancellation) to complete
- 80 prescriptions to check and sign (could increase to 250 on a duty day)
- 1-2 home visits to make
- **A simple mistake with any one of these could have drastic consequences**
- Above does not including time needed for running the business, essential meetings, preparing for compulsory GP assessments, training and keeping up to date, having lunch or even going for a toilet break



# DON'T BELIEVE THE PAPERS

- We are not out playing golf
- We are not lazy fat cats
- We are dedicated professionals who trained 10 years before getting our first permanent job
- We always strive to do their best to help people
- This is often at immense personal cost to ourselves and our families

# THE REALITY

- 500 fewer GPs in 2015 (in drastic contrast to government's political promise of 5,000 new GPs by 2020)
- 200 practices closed in 2015
- Another 900 practices (1 in 10) at risk of closure due to weak financial position
- 54% of GPs over 50 likely to quit within 5 years
- 28% of GPs considering cutting down from full-time

# IN THE MIDLANDS

- The most under-doctored area in England
- 65% of GP trainee positions unfilled
- Only 59.2 GPs per 100,000 population
  - compared with 65.5 average in England and 75.4 in South
- Existing doctors are cutting down or leaving altogether, fewer doctors are joining and no locums are available!

# WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU

- Difficulties with appointments
- Reduced patient satisfaction and more complaints
- GPs constantly fire-fighting rather than innovating
- Quality of care goes down; safe care becomes at risk
- Stressed, overworked and tired GPs who make mistakes
- Burnt out demoralised staff who get sick

# WHAT IS BEING DONE?

- Government promises £2.4billion *by 2020*
  - Actually none of it is new money and it will mean funding still below 2010 level
  - All tied in to being involved in various schemes (hoop-jumping, 7 day working)
  - No direct money being invested into individual practices to help them cope
- No direct help with what is happening on ground right now
- Continued push for more reorganisation and 7 day services when already there are not enough staff and resources for 5 day services

# WHAT'S THE FUTURE?

- More GP surgeries will go bust
- Loss of the family GP, where long-term relationships are made and fostered, and built on trust and caring
- Large parts of country where patients are without a GP
- Larger outfits run by nurses, pharmacists, paramedics and other practitioners following protocols to save money
- Private providers will step in looking to make a quick profit

# WE ARE DOING OUR BEST

- We know you are struggling to get in to see us
- We are not being difficult
- We are working as best we can to provide a quality service in a broken system
- But we have had no response to adverts for a new doctor or a locum to cover forthcoming maternity leave
- **GP surgeries all round the country face the same struggles**

# WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Try and self-care where appropriate
- Check our website for what to do - [ivy.gs/help](https://www.ivy.gs/help)
- Only book with us if you actually need to
- Make yourself aware of what is happening to your GP service
- Speak to our Patient Group
- Write to your MP and get some answers to your concerns