

Hilltops PPG - Chair / Secretary's report

Achievements in 2013

1. The group continues to struggle with low numbers. This places an additional burden on the Chair, Vice Chair and Secretary who have had the added disadvantage of working without a Treasurer in place throughout much of our time in office. This situation is further exacerbated by the fact that these difficulties mean that our achievements have been somewhat limited, indeed sometimes it feels that we are merely treading water. We have nevertheless persevered and made some progress and, with the addition of a Treasurer in 2014, look forward to further efforts throughout the year. We hold regular sub-group meetings in which to co-ordinate ideas and support each other whilst grappling with procedures. It has been an ongoing learning process for all of us.
2. The main topics for discussion have been the appointments system, the telephone system, continuity of care and parking difficulties. With appointments in mind, much thought has been given to the ongoing problems caused by DNAs, and Hilltops PPG continues to express its support of management's procedures on handling this issue. It has been established that the appointments system and telephone system are working well, there is just a lack of understanding on the part of many patients as to the whys and hows, which highlights one of the main functions of Hilltops PPG – communication. Unfortunately, parking is a different type of challenge with no imminent answers.
3. Caroline has agreed to allow PPG sub-group members to spend pre-arranged short periods of time in the surgery to talk with waiting patients and discuss any issues they have with such points as booking appointments, the telephone system, etc. Time spent by PPG members at the surgery has enabled us to see first hand how systems work and how patients react to them, along with the resultant challenges faced by Hilltops staff on a daily basis.
4. We have backed this up with posters around the waiting areas, giving a brief description of the PPG and its functions, together with contact details.
5. PPG members now attend the flu clinics and take the opportunity whilst there to distribute the annual patient questionnaire forms. The completed forms for 2013 have been gathered in, the results collated and added to those already on the website, together with patients' comments, and will form part of the annual practice statement, due to be submitted in early spring 2014.

6. Margaret Coultrup has been spending time leafleting schools with information about the PPG in an attempt to raise awareness and obtain the views of younger people. Margaret, together with PPG colleague Beverley Tavares, also spends the majority of the PPG's allocated time slots at the surgery seeking the views of young families, particularly in the light of the fact that few, if any, are able to come along and discuss these at PPG meetings because of their obvious family commitments.
7. Overall, we feel our greatest achievement has been in more focus on communication. In addition to time spent in the surgery, we have set up an email address for patients to use in order to submit non-medical questions and opinions. We still have some way to go on this because of a lack of PPG numbers, particularly in such things as regularly checking the PPG email inbox and processing any messages, but we hope that procedures in place can be put on a firmer footing in the coming year. We have also, thanks to the sterling efforts of Beverley Tavares, managed to produce our newsletter in time for the end of 2013 and aim to produce newsletters quarterly throughout the coming year.
8. On a further positive note, the PPG social events are becoming a regular feature although, again, more numbers would further enhance these occasions. Once more, communication is the key here. In the meantime, we are currently enjoying the series of live broadcasts at the Xscape multiscreens of performances from the Royal Opera House, the next being Don Giovanni on 12 February.
9. Book sales continue and the amount raised during the past year now stands at £98.50. Once the target of £100 is achieved, the total amount will be donated to The Readers' Service, which provides volunteer readers for the blind or partially sighted members of the community.
10. An AGM is an important event for any organisation but it is also a very good time to say thank you. On behalf of Hilltops PPG I would like to propose a huge vote of thanks to everyone who has helped during 2013

Sandra Reed
Hilltops PPG Secretary
February 2014