

The Benefits of Merging GP practices

Following on from Dr Wright's article last month about why GP practices are merging, I would like to take this opportunity to highlight some of the benefits that are starting to come through for our practice members (patients).

You may not have seen any benefits yet, in fact you may have only seen difficulties – particularly in obtaining routine appointments, which is perceived as being secondary to the merges. In fact, appointment waiting times is a national problem. Indeed, two surgeries in Cambridgeshire have stopped offering routine appointments to their patients altogether as their waiting times are longer than 6 weeks. We know there is a problem, and we are continually looking for solutions.

In the meantime, some of the benefits we can already offer Granta practice members include:-

1. Unlimited on-the-day access for all members. It may not be at your preferred site but if you need to be seen we will see you. Granta currently deals with approximately 19,000 practice members per month, compared to Addenbrookes Accident & Emergency department, who deal with roughly 12,000 per month.
2. Improved opening hours and access to appointments. Various Granta sites offer appointments from 8am to 8pm Monday to Thursday, 6.30am to 7pm Fridays and every Saturday morning.
3. Access to your medical records at any one of 5 sites, by any clinician you are booked in to see.
4. Access to a physiotherapy service that is offered on the day and on site for new problems. We are one of only 40 surgeries in the country offering this service.
5. The use of Emergency Care Practitioners (very advanced paramedics) for visits. This allows practice members to be seen quickly and if required, admission arranged, increasing chances of discharge on the same day, rather than waiting for the historical GP visit at lunch time, which almost guaranteed admission. The ECP's have unlimited access to the duty medical team if required for advice and due to availability actually can give increased continuity.
6. Diagnostic imaging - ultrasound scans are done on site at Granta Sawston.
7. Ear microsuction clinics are run on site at Granta Sawston.
8. Increased internal specialist input. By increasing our size we have increased our internal expertise. It is now possible to internally refer patients to another clinical member of staff who specialises in that area. They in turn may be able to see you in a much more timely manner, with your complete medical notes, and may reduce the possibility of having to attend a hospital appointment.
9. Access to a Social Navigator. This is a member of the Granta team who specifically looks at support from the community and ways of managing isolation and engaging patients from a holistic point of view.
10. Involvement in group consultations - a national initiative, which looks at providing information in groups to increase access and exposure and help people take ownership of their illness.
11. Fewer recruitment problems. We are in a relatively unique position of not having a recruitment crisis. In fact we have a number of clinicians approaching us asking if they can work for us because of what we are doing and ideas for the future.
12. An active Patient Participation Group (PPG). We are starting to really develop this and work together for the best of the practice.

These are but a few. We of course acknowledge there is a long way to go but with the merges we have given ourselves every opportunity possible to succeed and be able to provide continuing outstanding care to our practice members long into the future.

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