



Chairman's Report 2023

I start this report by expressing my appreciation to the surgery staff, all of whom make us welcome and give us their support in what we are trying to achieve. We are grateful to be allowed back into the surgery premises for our meetings after two years of pandemic exclusion and meetings via Zoom. It is also pleasing to see that there are more face-to-face consultations occurring though I recognize that in future GP consultations may be held in a variety of ways including via information technology as a result of experimentation during the pandemic. That affects footfall within the surgery and thus the best way for the PPG to meet patients.

The PPG has been well served again by Elspeth as Secretary, Jan as Deputy Chair, and Christine as Treasurer and I thank them for their help and dedication. On the question of finance our resources have depleted but we were still able to donate to support the surgery in the purchase of a surgical Doppler system which allows an assured and rapid assessment and diagnosis for patients. This kit allows the surgery to see and deal with more patients more quickly, thus a win-win.

We have enjoyed a wide variety of guest speakers on a range of medically associated subjects, as arranged by Jan. My thanks to her. We have also again enjoyed a Garden Party in the lovely garden of John Neale – many thanks to John.

With the pandemic still lingering, our members have been able to provide a lot of support to the surgery with the vaccination centre. There has been a lull in vaccinations, but they are now in full swing for mature and vulnerable patients, and I expect with the revelation of the latest strain – Arcturus Omicron XBB.1.16 – demand will increase and we will be there to help.

This year my report has a different tone from previous years. My previous reports have focussed on the past year. Now I want to look forward and want to see how we can develop and improve our effectiveness as a PPG. I do feel a sense of disappointment that I have settled into a too comfortable zone where we meet but not achieve or change much. Taking the saying, 'If you always do what you've always done, you'll always get what you've always got' I feel we have to change and move forwards. Thankfully there are members who have good ideas and a good understanding of the medical needs of our patient family, and we need you/them now.

In the past members have suggested that we could introduce a social media link to share up-to-date information and news with many more of our patient family – one of our PPG Aims; but we haven't. Data Protection law prevents us from circulating information using contact data held by the surgery so we cannot send out news that way. Our excellent Newsletters are one way we can make contact but again, that is only with those who have provided us with their email addresses or if patients pick one up if they come into the surgery. So how do we increase our communication opportunities? I come back to



social media which I have personally rejected until now but having joined the WhatsApp group for the Singing Group I have to recognise that it works much better than I thought it could. That, and other options are definitely worth exploring as communication and the sharing of information can be instantaneous, which is what people are coming to expect. We must move with the times and embrace the technology of today and the future but that does create its own demand to ensure it is up-to-date

While that is important, we must not neglect those who do not have access to the internet for whatever reason. Hand-in-hand with that comes the thought that there may be some we cannot reach through a lack of common language and perhaps the biggest challenge, how to encourage young people to become involved. Difficult challenges requiring special skills our members may not have. I invite anyone who has ideas on these issues to please come forward with ideas. Interestingly, from the National Association of PPGs A.G.M. it is clear that a lot of PPGs face the same challenges.

So I'd like the future to look different and I and we need to work to achieve that so that next year's Chairman's Report also looks different. We need to use our imagination and capitalise on good ideas, to use the many varied talents of our members and to seek out good ideas from other PPGs – or anywhere else! That is a challenge to myself, and I invite you all to join me in rising to it. To assist you, below is a copy of our PPG Aims.

Steve Bates

PPG Chairman

The aims of this group are to:-

- Provide means for patients to make positive suggestions about the Practice and specific medical conditions such as an 'expert' or experienced patient
- Act as a representative group that can be called upon to influence the local provision of health and social care
- Give practice staff and patients the opportunity to discuss topics of mutual interest in their Practice
- Develop self-help projects to meet the needs of fellow patients, such as befriending, help with transport, and bereavement support
- Encourage health education activities within the Practice.