

THE HISTORY OF PIG

PIG's aims are twofold

- to ensure that the “patient voice” is heard in Practice considerations and
- to increase the easy flow of information, views and concerns between the practice staff and patients.

History

In the spring of 1995 some 18 or so patients of the practice responded to an invitation to meet with two of the GPs to discuss the formation of a Patient Group. It was made very clear from the outset that while the practice would support and encourage the group it was up to patients to determine how such a group would work and develop.

A small working group was formed and a target date some six months later was set for the group's launch. It was decided that the group should be called the Patient Involvement Group, thus leading to PIG with its formalised and easily recognisable logo. Publicity leaflets and a questionnaire about practice matters and concerns were prepared and 1000 copies distributed. Good relations had been established with the local Sixth Form which then analysed the returned 356 replies and made an exhibit with graphs diagrams and photos. This formed the topic for the launch meeting in October 1995 attended by over 120 people... standing room only! A committee was elected and PIG was on its way.

Finance

Initially the practice supported the group in costs of hiring rooms, printing etc. However PIG earned money through distributing MAAG surveys for the Practice. The practice continues to help PIG financially.

What have we done?

Major Events

1996 Formation of Arthritis self help group. This met monthly with talks, discussions etc. It ceased to meet formally in 2004, but a small group remain in contact.

1996 Started the newsletter

1997 Health Watch Day and 2001 a Health Odyssey. Some 30+ stands covered a wide range of health promotion with information from both professional and voluntary organisations relating to health and general well being, e.g. social services

provisions, dieticians, drug testing, road safety etc. Music and drama was provided by the Sixth Form and on another occasion people were encouraged to try some line dancing and watch a yoga demonstration. Both these events were attended by well over 400 people. The costs were covered by grants from the local authority and sponsorship by local groups.

2001 Encouraged by Dr Mark Drury, PIG submitted an entry to the Royal College of GPs for the National Award for Patient Groups. We won and were presented with a cheque for £1000.

2003 Move to new premises. A PIG committee member had been closely involved in the planning of this project. PIG produced a special newsletter with plans of the new surgery and PIG helpers were there for 3 weeks to help as guides.

2005 Activities Day A joint venture with LINK but on a much smaller scale than the earlier Health Watch days..

2005 10th Birthday Celebrations attended by patients, our founder GPs Dr Mark Drury and Dr Phillip Ambler, and representatives from the PCT.

2007 Healthy Eating Stand . This was outside W.H.Smith and Waitrose in an effort to take some of the health issues away from the Health Centre and to where people were doing their weekly shop. A range of information, leaflets, healthy snacks and a children's activity were on offer. Some 200 people were engaged.

2008 Website This was finally launched with a new volunteer web master. This initiative had been started with the Sixth Form much earlier, but had failed to "get off the ground" due largely to the time limits of the students with exams and moving on to universities etc

2009 Practice Diabetes Group. This was a Practice initiative but some PIG members are involved in its running . This group meets every two months with speakers and discussions

2009 "A Day in the Life of Church Street Practice" looking at a typical day in the Practice.

Members of staff were asked to record their routines throughout a day and talk with a PIG committee member about them. All disciplines within the practice were covered and these accounts were then written up and made into a booklet. Some 800 were printed and it was put on the web. PIG has been reliably informed that it has been read not only in this country but even in America and Australia! Such is the value of the web!

2010 Age Concern Information Fair. PIG had a stand – an opportunity to talk with people - One person said that her copy of 'A Day in the Life of' had been sent to her son, a GP in Surrey and it had caused quite a stir so it has got around!

2010 Retirement party for Drs Phillip Ambler and Mark Drury Over 200 people attended this highly successful event. Gifts and cheques were presented to both GPs.

2011 At the suggestion of a patient we took part in the National Atrial Fibrillation week. There were displays together with a stand manned by PIG committee. Children were particularly excited by the stickers! One little boy having discovered that he had a pulse in both wrists, stuck a sticker on each wrist while another maintained that he didn't have a pulse but he put it over his heart

Other Work

Committee Meetings:

The committee, made up solely of patients, meets every 4 – 6 weeks. These are fairly informal meetings. Matters arising go forward to the Practice Meeting (see below). The Practice manager or a member of staff may be invited to attend when there are specific issues to discuss. Equally sometimes a practice member will ask to come along to talk with us about a particular topic.

The monthly Practice Primary Care meetings are attended by two or three PIG committee members who take part in the discussions and provide some feedback from patients. PIG encourages patients to put forward their ideas and suggestions so we can provide feedback to the practice.

Newsletters:

These started in 1996 - They cover a wide variety of topics through practice matters, e.g. appointment systems, general NHS topics like PALS and voluntary organisations e.g. First Responders and the local Independent Advice Centre with its wonderful assisted travel scheme.

AGM Meetings:

AGMs are held usually in November . There has been a wide variety of speakers over the years.

Patient and Public Meetings:

These are held as appropriate as situations arise and are for both the local community (e.g. the Out of Hours service) and patients (e.g. changes in the Practice).

Guides for flu clinics and patient surveys.

The committee are actively involved both in helping to draw up the survey and in discussing the findings with the practice.

Informal weekly Health Walks

These are led by two PIG patients are open to anyone in the community.

Recycling unwanted Medication

Some PIG committee members help with the sorting and dispatching of these to the charity Intercare.

Underlying Principles

It is important to stress that PIG is not a complaints group. While the committee will draw the attention of the practice to matters of general concern and interest, individual issues need to be discussed with the Practice Manager. Where issues are raised by PIG with the practice every effort is made to “feed back” the results either directly to the person or group or via the newsletter.

In conclusion while PIG is independent of the practice, we greatly appreciate the encouragement, support and trust that is offered by members of the practice. If you wish to become involved please contact us via the practice or by email at churchstreetpig@gmail.com