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Date:	11.02.2020
Review Date:	On-going

CORONAVIRUS PRACTICE POLICY

Background

In December 2019 the city of Wuhan in China started showing signs of contagion of a new virus. By mid-February over 40,000 people were infected with the virus in China and 27 other countries had reported cases. This has now become a Pandemic with person to person contact.

The aim of this policy is to limit the spread of the virus if/when it takes hold in the UK so that the practice can stay open as long as possible to serve those with non-virus problems, this includes the vulnerable and those suffering long term conditions. This policy sets out how our practice will deal with minimising the risk to both patients, staff and visitors and should be read in conjunction with the [Flu Pandemic Policy](#).

Phase 1 - Effective 03.02.2020

Communication to patients

Signs have been put on all clinical doors and exits and entrances telling patients that if they have been to China or been in contact with someone from China and develop flu like symptoms to call 111 and not come to the practice.

The website has also been updated with this information.

Hand washing

Hand washing remains the most effective way of not spreading germs. Staff are reminded to wash more frequently to keep themselves as safe as possible from the spread of germs.

Staff Areas

Staff are reminded that all access doors are to be closed and not left on the latch during opening hours. Posters have been put up to emphasise staff areas.

Staff Toilets

"Staff only" signs have been placed on the staff toilets where they are accessible to patients. Again this is to limit the spread.

Isolation Toilet

An isolation toilet has been identified, this is next to the cleaners cupboard and little used. This will be brought in to play if required.

Hand Gel

Whilst it is recognised that washing your hands is the best form of defence, we do not have sinks at the entrances and exits to the building, nor do we have sufficient staff to take patients to the toilets. Therefore it is practical to use hand gel as a defence on entry and exit.

All patient accessing the extended hours service will be asked at the OOH door to use the hand gel and reminded on the way out to use it again.

During core hours, patients will be asked to use the hand gel before reception take their query.

Door Handles

A rota has been set up between reception and admin staff to wipe all door handles every 2 hours and sign a sheet to ensure they have been done.

The following are included:

- Consulting rooms
- Toilets
- Entrance
- OOH Entrance
- Fire Exits
- CSH Doors (outside only)
- CSH Comms Room
- Staff Rooms
- Admin and reception doors

Touchscreen

The touchscreen will be disabled until the Coronavirus has been contained.

Masks

Masks are available for reception/admin staff and patients with suspected Coronavirus, these are held at reception. A visor mask is available for doctors to use when a case is suspected; this can be located in the nurse store.

Desk & Phone Protocol

Do you have flu like symptoms with a cough?



YES

- 1) Have you recently travelled from or through China, Thailand, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia, Japan or South Korea, or been in contact with someone who has?
- 2) Have you recently been on a cruise?



YES
Call 111



YES

- 3) Do you work for an airline or outlet operating out of Heathrow?
- 4) Are you cabin staff on a plane flying from/to Heathrow?



FOR STAFF ONLY

If after calling 111 they direct the patient back to the practice follow the steps opposite



Refer to Duty Doctor who will call them and if necessary make an appointment in their session.

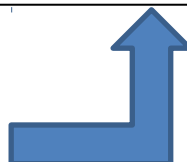
The Duty Doctor should explain that on arrival the patient should enter through the main automatic doors and push the blue disabled bell at the second set of blue doors.

Reception staff on hearing the bell should put on a mask and take one to the patient.

The patient should be escorted round the outside of the building to the entrance with the slope and PIN entry. This is our Isolation area.

Clinicians should wear gloves, visor masks and aprons which should be put in clinical waste as soon as the consultation has been undertaken.

Reception should also place their mask in the clinical waste bin.



Background

We have now had 4 possible cases referred back to us from 111.

Patients 1 & 2 returned from cruises where Chinese people had been on board. Patient 3 was a Cathay Pacific air steward and Patient 4 had returned from China and their child had fallen ill. In all cases we have had to see the patient but potentially it has put staff and patients at risk.

Total Triage

In the summer we trialed a total triage system, which we later adapted. The system enabled us to better manage demand and where possible 2/3rds of those who would have come in were dealt with over the phone. This is the only way to keep staff and patients safe from this virus and we will be returning to until such times as it is safe to revert to our current system.

Managing the Change

Navigators

Navigators will continue to navigate patients towards LIVI and extended access where appropriate. In the case of extended access, the following questions should be asked:

- 1) Have you recently travelled from or through China, Malaysia, Japan or South Korea, or been in contact with someone who has?
- 2) Have you recently been on a cruise?

If the answer to either is **YES** extended access is not appropriate and a triage call should be booked.

Navigators will also ask these questions when booking a nurse or HCA appointment. In the main these are routine appointments for which people do not normally book if ill. They are patients with long term conditions and the elderly and frail. Currently they pose less of a threat.

Nurses/HCA's

The nurse and HCA clinics continue as normal and continue to be bookable on-line.

GP Appointments

On-Line bookings will cease for all GP appointments. Patients will not be able to directly book appointments over the phone or in person.

We will return to the triage and face to face slots as before. Patients will call in and be booked a triage slot with the GP who will call the patient and book an appointment on the day if they cannot deal with the request over the phone.

Using this format means we can determine who needs to be seen in the isolation area, who needs to be referred to PHE and those regular patient who need to be seen for normal business reasons.

Isolation Protocol

The isolation protocol will apply to anyone with flu like symptoms.

The Doctor should explain that on arrival the patient should enter through the main automatic doors and push the blue disabled bell at the second set of blue doors.

Reception staff on hearing the bell should put on a mask and take one to the patient.

The patient should be escorted round the outside of the building to the entrance with the slope and PIN entry. This is our Isolation area.

**Clinicians should wear gloves, visor masks and aprons which should be put in clinical waste as soon as the consultation has been undertaken.
Reception should also place their mask in the clinical waste bin.**

Our bookable appointments appear on a 10 day rolling cycle. We will continue to see those book but block those not used and back fill with triage and face to face appointments. We had already taken the liberty of blocking appointments last week and therefore by the 19th should be in total triage.

Doctors wishing to follow up patients should book them into the telephone follow up slots and advise patients this will be done over the phone.

Risk Assessment

This is all about managing risk and keeping staff, patients and visitors safe.

The best way to do this is to limit visits to the GP. The practice needs to function as long as it can to ensure our regular patients continue receiving care.

Patients will be seen on the day and whilst there will be complaints over not being able to book in advance it means we will be keeping the spread to a minimum. We do not have the resources to call all pre-booked patients to ask if they have flu like symptoms on the day of their appointment. These resources will be stretched and can be better utilised.

This risk has been assessed and deemed total triage is the best way forward for now.

In our planning we have tried to stay ahead of the game and by the time all appointments are of the total triage kind, we will know what we are facing and be ready for it.

Informing Patients

A newsletter will be available on the website and a text message sent to ask patients to read it.

Those patients without mobiles or internet are our vulnerable and elderly patients. At this point in time they pose less of a threat and therefore when they phone or attend the practice, we have time to explain this to them. By the time we change to the next phase our patient base will know.

Please see Appendix 1 for the newsletter.

This policy will be updated as things change.

12.02.2020

Dear Patients

Coronavirus

There has been much discussion on radio, TV and social media about the Coronavirus. The purpose of this newsletter is not to alarm or frighten anyone but to let you know what we are doing at the practice to keep you as safe as possible when you come to visit us for your healthcare needs. I can't say for definite that in the coming weeks we will be virus free, but I would like to think we have done everything we can to limit the spread.

For many of our regular visitors with long term conditions, young families who need to their children to be immunised, women going through pregnancy etc. it is important that services are maintained. The only way to do this safely is to go back to our total triage system for GP Appointments until this has played out. We have therefore put the following in place:

Government Guidelines

Travellers from Wuhan and Hubei Province

If you have travelled from Wuhan or Hubei Province to the UK in the last 14 days you should immediately:

- **stay indoors and avoid contact with other people as you would with the flu**
- **call NHS 111 to inform them of your recent travel to the area**

Travellers from other parts of China and other specified areas

If you have returned to the UK and visited or passed through the following countries:

China	Thailand	Japan
Republic of Korea	Hong Kong	Taiwan
Singapore	Malaysia	Macau

If in the last 14 days you have developed symptoms of cough or fever or shortness of breath, you should immediately:

- **stay indoors and avoid contact with other people as you would with the flu**
- **call NHS 111 to inform them of your recent travel to the country**

Practice Measures

Hand Gel

Whilst good old fashioned soap and water is still by far the best way of protecting against germs, we do not have sinks at the entrances and exits. The next line of defence is hand gel and we would ask you all to use it on entry and exit. This will also help against Norovirus and Seasonal Flu.

Door Handles

Our door handles are wiped every 2 hours to help reduce the risk of spreading germs.

Nurse/HCA Appointments

For now these remain pre-bookable, on-line, via the phone and at reception. Should you develop flu like symptoms before or on the day of your appointment, please call the practice first. At the point of writing this, these appointments pose the least risk.

GP Appointments

All pre-bookable appointments have been suspended until it is safe to reinstate them. The reason for this is that whilst you may be well when you book it, you might develop symptoms on or just before your appointment.

Our navigators will direct you to the most appropriate care which will include a telephone triage appointment with a doctor.

To enable us to manage risk please ensure you tell us if:

- **You have flu like symptoms?**
- **Work for an airline or outlet operating out of Heathrow?**
- **Are cabin staff on a plane flying from/to Heathrow?**

Where the answer is NO a telephone appointment will be booked with the doctor who will determine if he/she can deal with the problem on the phone or he/she will book an appointment the later that day.

Where the answer is YES, the doctor will call you and ask a few more questions. Several actions may be relevant here:

- **If after taking your history the doctor feels you may have seasonal flu, you will be seen in our isolation area as a precaution.**
- **We may call Public Health England for advice which may result in you being seen in our isolation area or tested for coronavirus.**

Isolation Area

If you are to be seen in our isolation area, you will be asked to access the building through the double doors and press the "Disabled Assistance" bell on the second set of doors.

A member of staff will meet you at the door wearing a mask and ask you to put one on. They will take you round to the rear entrance and sit you in the isolation area.

A doctor will come and see you there. As a precaution they will also be wearing a mask and gloves.

General

These precautions are sensible and should reduce the risk of infection, they are not designed to frighten or upset patients. They should be seen as us trying to reduce/limit the potential infection of this virus.

I will keep you posted of any changes, we are currently ahead of general planning and this should allow us time to explain to those patient without internet and mobile phone, of the changes we are making. It would also be helpful if you know someone who may not have access to this newsletter to explain the changes to them.

Stay safe and warm, kind regards

Caroline Self
Practice Manager