

Hello ... and it's that time of the year again when we're asked by the NHS to do a survey of our patients, so here are a few words of explanation.

This is to feedback what sort of job we're doing to the NHS bosses – so, needless to say it's important to us in our battle to get adequate funding for the practice (see below) that we get a reasonable response both in terms of quantity of forms and positive comments. We do also look at the forms (and read between the lines) so it's not just a meaningless bureaucratic exercise – it helps us to make changes for the better. (If you want to make anonymous comments, by the way, we'll be reintroducing the suggestions box in the waiting room shortly.)

You'll have noticed that we have become increasingly reliant on nurses – particularly those with diagnostic skills and/or the training to enable them to write prescriptions. This is of necessity – although we have enough patients to justify two doctors, we do not have a budget even for one (as docs who aren't prepared to work on a voluntary basis are a costly commodity.) Having started out on this road, however, we're pleased with the way it's been going ... we think our nurses knock spots off many of today's GPs (particularly the 'hired hands' type who do their shift, go home and forget about the practice and its patients until the next shift) ... but do you agree? We'll be interested to find out.

As I say, we're still fighting for a financial deal from the NHS that doesn't discriminate against (a) the practice and (b) you the Patients ... the same sort of arrangement all the other practices in the town and their patients enjoy ... so if you can squeeze a word of encouragement to our lords and masters onto the survey form (or drop a line to our MP, John Whittingdale at the House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA) it would be much appreciated! This would not only help us provide a better service to you now but would allow us to continue to do so in the long term.

Our other big battle at the moment is the one to keep your medical records confidential – but more on that later.

If you have got time to quickly fill in the form, it would be much appreciated.

With thanks and best wishes

John

(With apologies to those of you who, like me, think:
'Oh no not another *expletive-deleted* form!' whenever these things come round.)