

Melbourne Grove Medical Practice

Newsletter September 2016

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Chronic pain: our dedicated in-house pain clinic

Substance misuse and alcohol dependence: an interview with our drug link-worker Sharon Peters



Going that extra mile

At a time when general practice is under incredible pressure and demand, we thought we would dedicate this issue to explaining to you some of the additional services we offer at Melbourne Grove to vulnerable or complex patients.

Whilst we work hard to help all patients at all times, some patients have very specific or complicated needs, and require extra support and assistance. As such, our practice tries to prioritize such patients, whilst still offering our dedicated service to all patient groups.

If you feel that your circumstances make you vulnerable, please come and talk to our team and we can explain in detail the help offered in the practice, and in Southwark, that may be of benefit to you.

One such vulnerable group is those who are addicted to drugs and alcohol. As clinical lead, I have specific training in this area of healthcare, and I work closely with Sharon Peters who is our link worker with Lifeline Southwark. Details of our substance misuse clinic can be found inside this edition of the newsletter.

Lastly, we have set up a special clinic on Tuesdays, for patients who have chronic severe pain conditions, or who have been on strong pain relief medications (opiates) for over a year. Such patients are exclusively invited to this clinic; please do let us know if you would like more information.

With kindness and best wishes,

Dr Jonathan Love, Clinical Lead GP

Opening Times

Monday	8am – 6:30pm
Tuesday	8am – 6:30pm
Wednesday	8am – 6:30pm
Thursday	8am – 6:30pm
Friday	8am – 6:30pm
Saturday	9am – 1pm (Pre-booked only)



Contact us (comments, complaints, and ideas):

Telephone: 020 8299 0499

Email: souccg.mgmp@nhs.net

Our special services for patients with substance misuse

Sharon Peters works for Lifeline, an organisation that works closely with the practice to help patients with substance abuse and addiction. She runs a clinic at Melbourne Grove every Tuesday, assisted by Dr Love. Below she describes what occurs in this clinic, and how patients (or their friends or family) can access services if they are worried about addiction.

GP Shared care is a partnership between Melbourne Grove surgery and Lifeline.

Lifeline is a free, safe and confidential drug and alcohol service for men and woman over the age of 18 who live in the Borough of Southwark, who want support in dealing with their addiction.

If you or a family member would like to use this service please phone: **020 8629 2348** or drop in to **146 Camberwell Road, SE5 OEE – Mon, Tues, Thurs or Fri between 10.00am – 12.00pm**

On arrival you will be assessed so that the right treatment package and support can be arranged.

Lifeline have a dedicated work force of engagement and recovery workers. They provide advice and support, drug testing and substitute prescribing to help men and woman towards achieving their personal recovery goals. This is done using a combination of therapeutic interventions such as MI (Motivational Interventions), CBT (Cognitive Behavioural Therapy), harm reduction and community detox (including with medications such as methadone).

Treatment packages are tailored to the individual's needs; and as such this is a safe, confidential and holistic service.

When the time is right, patients can be seen at Melbourne Grove, for their on-going care. There is a GP available (Dr Love) during this clinic for any concerns or queries, and to review your medical needs. You will develop a close partnership with your support worker, and with time and dedication, you can reach your goal to recovery.



Meet the team:
Jennie Thomas

Jennie is one of our Customer Service Officers, and has been working at our surgery, and previously in other practices in Southwark, for many years.

I work on the reception desk with a great team, and also do a lot of administration work behind the scenes, which I enjoy doing a lot. Sometimes, I also work at other local GP practices if they find themselves to be unexpectedly short-staffed. I would like to do more administration work in the future as I enjoy doing this kind of work.

In my spare time, I like to visit my friends and family. My hobbies are salsa dancing and cooking. At Melbourne Grove we often have "bring and share" staff lunches, and I make a wicked macaroni and cheese, which always goes down well with colleagues! I have a cat at home, whose name is Lucky. He is a male cat, black all over, and is a joy to have and look after.

Lifeline and drug/alcohol services



Patients who are worried about substance misuse, alcohol, and gambling, can contact Lifeline Southwark directly. You must self-refer to this service by phone or drop-in. Leaflets are available from your GP or nurse, or in the reception area.

LIFELINE SOUTHWARK: 020 8629 2348
Drop-in: Mon, Tues, Thurs, Fri

146 Camberwell Road
10.00am – 12.00pm



Chronic pain: what is it and what can we do to help?

Chronic (long-term) pain affects around 30-50% of the population of the UK and so is very common. However, pain of this nature can be difficult to treat. Despite a tendency by some doctors to prescribe strong pain medications, patients can experience many serious side effects from being on such medicines long-term. Furthermore, the evidence is very weak as to whether or not medications actually work for chronic pain.

With this in mind, we have developed a dedicated pain clinic on Tuesday mornings, to help patients with medical therapy, but more importantly, to help them to learn other strategies to cope with chronic pain.

Chronic vs. acute pain

Acute pain occurs in response to an illness or injury, and is usually managed effectively with pain relief (analgesia) and rest.

Chronic pain is pain that has lasted for longer than 3 months after the usual recovery period for an illness or injury. It may be as a result of a chronic condition. It may start with a definite problem at a certain time or come on gradually, perhaps for no obvious reason.

Despite treatment attempts with medication, rest and relaxation, hot baths or massage, this chronic pain may not be effectively relieved. Things that would usually settle or treat our pain are not successful for chronic pain. This is because the problem is with the *pain system*, rather than being located in any specific part of the body. The pain system does not appear to be functioning normally or as you might usually expect.

There is still a lot that is not understood about chronic pain and the pain system. For example, why the pain continues on after things have healed or why pain can be present without any physical problem being found.

The problem with medications

Without a doubt, strong painkillers (analgesia) can treat acute pain very effectively. However, the evidence for their use in chronic non-cancer pain conditions is limited. Commonly used medications such as opiates are associated with many side effects long-term, are very addictive, and can cause tolerance (i.e. becoming more ineffective as time goes by). Sometimes, these types of painkillers can actually *increase* your feeling of pain (hyperalgesia).

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)

Although medications may not be the answer, it is not to say there is nothing that can be done. Psychological therapy such as CBT can help 'reboot' the pain system of the brain and can be very effective. A key part of this is recognising the "biopsychosocial model" of pain, meaning the interplay between biological (your body), psychological (your emotional state), and social (your work, family life, etc.)

Living with chronic pain can be stressful. Managing at home, work, with friends and family as well as many other things can be difficult. You may not feel you have any control over the pain and don't feel able to cope with it. The pain can lead to feelings of anxiety or fear about what might be causing it; especially where there is no obvious cause. It may feel like damage is being done to your body and you may feel some concern about what the pain might mean for the future.

Feeling pain can also make you feel tense, especially if you expect the pain to come back or get worse. You may feel easily angered and hostile towards people who you meet that don't understand your situation or how your pain affects you. You may feel hopeless and very down about feeling this pain, which can result in depression, and difficulty sleeping.

In our clinic, we spend a long time exploring these issues and help patients develop strategies to overcome these aspects of pain.

Mindfulness

This is a meditation-type of approach, to relax the body and the mind, to ease chronic pain. We provide resources to you in our clinic, to learn these methods in a guided way.

Exercise and diet, and overcoming fear

We will teach you ways of planning activity, and gradually increasing your daily functioning. Diet is also an important factor in controlling pain. As discussed above, fear of causing damage and experiencing an increase in pain upon doing exercise can be troubling, and we cover this in depth during your appointment.

Accessing our Tuesday pain service

If you experience chronic pain, are on long-term painkillers that you are keen to reduce/stop, or are off work due to a pain condition, please do ask our receptionist about this special clinic. Dr Love will review all patients who express an interest, and contact you to book an appointment. With dedication, willingness and an open mind, we really can make a difference in helping you get a productive, comfortable and happy life, despite the pain that you may have.

Vulnerable patients

There are many circumstances that our patients may find themselves in, which make them feel vulnerable. We value all our patients tremendously, and are particularly dedicated to providing support to those who are most at need.

We work very closely with local agencies, and our staff have received special training, to offer help to those patients who find themselves in difficult, damaging, or dangerous situations.

Some examples of this include:

- Child and adult safeguarding
- Alcohol and substance misuse services
- The UK Refugee council
- St Mungo's support for the homeless
- St Christopher's hospice for palliative care
- Age UK, and support for isolated housebound patients
- Learning difficulties, and mental health assessments
- Support for victims of domestic violence



This list gives just some examples. No matter what circumstances you find yourself in, either short-term or life-long, if you feel you are in a vulnerable situation please do let us know.

By assessing your individual needs, we can provide the extra support that may make your life much easier. At Melbourne Grove we pride ourselves at offering holistic care, so if you feel that you have a special need, come and talk to us.

In the next issue:

Mental health awareness day: special events throughout the practice

Returning to work after mental illness: a difficult but important step

Flu vaccines: the facts and the myths, as we embark on our 2016-17 flu vaccination campaign

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