 **Skene Medical Group**

Hopefully we are all enjoying the gradual reduction in Covid related restrictions and feel that life looks like it’s heading back to normal. The doctors and staff at the practice would like to thank everyone for their patience and understanding with regard to the ongoing disruption to our pre-Covid service. You may be aware following the First Minister’s recent update, that 2 metre indoor social distancing is to remain within healthcare settings and that masks continue to be mandatory apart from those patients who may be exempt.

For this reason, we would continue to ask patients to make initial contact with the surgery by telephone and we will continue to operate with a restricted maximum number of patients in the waiting room.

Since we stopped using the eConsult platform, the current “hybrid” system of telephone and face to face appointments seems to have improved the situation for both patients and staff alike. It’s not perfect but has allowed us to begin the process of getting back to a more normal service.

One plea we would like to make would be to those patients who are unable to attend their pre-booked appointments. We are still experiencing a number of non-attendances and, more than ever, these have an impact on overall appointment availability. Please let us know if you can’t make it and we may then offer the slot to another patient.

Primary care still faces huge challenges caused by the pandemic. Before Covid there was already significant pressure on general practice and this has been increased due to a number of factors. We are dealing with a large volume of patients who have possible Covid related symptoms. This not only creates a volume of work but also the challenges associated with managing a relatively new clinical “syndrome” where the evidence is continually evolving.

Secondary care services face a huge backlog and this, in turn, increases practice workload as patients require ongoing input for their symptoms while waiting to be seen at hospital clinics. We are typically unable to influence your hospital waiting time but would always be very happy to reassess the clinical situation if your symptoms change significantly between referral and being seen at the hospital.

We are working hard to re-establish our core services, including follow up appointments for chronic disease. We have been unable to re-start our “enhanced services” such as minor surgery and joint injections simply due to a lack of capacity. Hopefully it will be possible to re-start soon, but the level of activity will be determined by the ongoing demand for acute appointments. It’s impossible to predict exactly when…the second and third waves put paid to our previous predictions!

Finally, we would encourage everyone to take up the offer of Covid vaccination. The success of the programme has definitely paved the way for easing of restrictions and has reduced hospital admissions and deaths despite the very high case numbers that we have seen recently.

It seems incredible but this year’s flu and Covid 3rd dose programme will be rolled out in the coming months. This will be delivered centrally by NHS Grampian and patients in the target cohorts will be notified by NHSG regarding the arrangements in due course.

Hopefully, by the time we write our next article, the timescales around the NHS and practice recovery plans will be clearer and we won’t have had another Covid related spanner in the works.

Kind Regards,

All at Skene Medical Group.