

## The Current NHS

All we seem to hear at the moment in the news and through the papers is how poorly the NHS is performing.

*“Yet another A&E department is failing to hit target”;*

*“Hospitals are bursting at the seams”;*

*“Going to the doctors isn’t like it used to be”.*

From the position of your local GP practice, all of the above are true but there are understandable reasons why. A&E departments are struggling to hit a 95% target of seeing patients within 4 hours, but that may be due to the increasing number of patients going to A&E. Hospitals are bursting at the seams but this may not be due to poor efficiency, it may be to do with an ever increasing elderly population many of whom have chronic diseases who require additional care. Finally, yes, going to the doctors isn’t like it used to be.

If you’ve read our article on the “Day in the Life of a GP”, you’ll be able to start understanding a little more of what happens behind the scenes, when the consulting door is closed. Gone are the days when your GP will remember the histories of each of his patients, where you will have time to catch up on news as well as treat your concerns.

We are lucky at Bacon Road as through the telephone triage system, we are able to treat many patients over the phone and enable those who need to be seen, to see a GP usually the same day or next day. However, sometimes, even the provision of 223 appointments a day across clinicians is not enough. Why can’t we have more doctors on? The answer to this is two-fold, the first is that there simply aren’t enough GPs being trained at the moment to fulfil current vacancies. There are steps being taken by the ‘powers that be’ to address this issue of workforce and we can only hope that they will help our practices continue to flourish. The other issue is that of finance. GPs are funded on a complicated formula depending on many factors. However, the number of times that a patient attends the practice for an appointment is not factored in. As our population ages and medicine advances, patients are diagnosed with more conditions; so rather than attending the surgery once or twice per year, they are attending four, five times a year. Doctors are also now being forced to explore different tests and medications before being able to refer on to hospital consultants in order to manage the hospital’s capacity. Once again more appointments are being used in your GP practice.

*How can we make the best use of our GP and how can we help, as patients?*

The main thing we ask patients to do is look after themselves to the best of their ability.

- Keeping well will reduce the number of times patients have a need to visit their GP.
- Treat yourselves using the self-help guides for common conditions available on [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk). If in doubt, book a telephone call with a GP for advice.
- When you do need to visit, please ensure that you book and keep your appointments. If you are unable to attend, tell us so that we can release your slot.

- If you call for an emergency appointment, please tell our receptionists as much as you can about your condition. Have you taken over-the-counter medications / taken your temperature? How long have your symptoms been present? Have you had them before? This will help us signpost you to the best resolution.