



## **How can you help your GP run to time?**

A common complaint by patients is "*Why is the GP running late?*"

It's a source of frustration and inconvenience for patients AND doctors alike. In fact, we don't ALWAYS run late with our surgeries and quite often our patients are seen on time and even early.

Dr Duggal gives an insight into why delays happen and how you may be able to help.

### **Arriving late**

The GP is ready to start consulting at a set time. If the first patient of the day is late, for instance due to traffic or difficulty parking, your doctor is already running at least 10 minutes late before the surgery has started. This delay can persist through the session, especially if the GP has some difficult consultations in the rest of the surgery.

### **10 minute intervals**

Believe it or not, it's a push to fit 1 problem in that time frame let alone 2 or 3. Most surgeries provide 10 minute appointments. This was deemed to be the ideal time frame when the government considered how GPs should practice. If we provided more time than this, there would be fewer appointments to offer.

The ten minutes doesn't necessarily mean that you have 10 minutes face-to-face with the doctor.

A typical consultation looks something like this.....

- 10 mins: GP spends a minute familiarising him/herself with records
- 9 mins: GP calls you in and listens to your reason for coming
- 7 mins: GP asks you relevant questions to help him/her ascertain the cause of your problems including 'red flag' questions to make sure this is nothing serious
- 5 mins: GP may need to examine you
- 4 mins: GP discusses the likely cause of your problem and involves you in discussing the best way to manage it, with advice if things go wrong and how to follow up if needed. They may need to give a prescription with appropriate advice about your medication or even organise a blood test. The government has also asked your GP to record information for monitoring purposes.
- 1 min: GP says goodbye and speedily types up everything discussed in the consultation to ensure continuity of care.

This time doesn't include speaking to specialists for advice, organising an emergency admission to hospital or frequent interruptions by paramedics, palliative care nurse or consultants wanting to speak to the GP urgently. Your doctor may need to bring in a chaperone, or read relevant documentation from a specialist and check previous blood tests. This all consumes valuable time but is necessary to do.

There really isn't time for a list or 'just a quick one'. So in practice, your face to face time is about 7 minutes.

## **The List**

The most common reason why GPs run late is that patients often bring 'a list' to the GP or mistakenly believe that doctors appreciate you saving it all up so you don't need to come back again and again. Not only is it unfair to you and the doctor to rush through the problems, but it's also VERY UNSAFE. Your doctor is likely to make mistakes if there is too much to deal with and will invariably run late. We have a one appointment, 1 problem policy. If the doctor deals with every problem on the list, the patient will be content, but it means that subsequent patient in the surgery will be seen late. A doctor can run up to an hour late if several patients present with a list.

## **Complex problems**

Another common reason why a GP may run late is due to a COMPLEX MEDICAL PROBLEM which may require more time questioning, examining and perhaps further in house tests such as an ECG/blood taking or even a discussion with a specialist or sudden referral to hospital which again takes time such as a worrying chest pain, a child who cannot breathe or a suspected burst appendix. Certain patients require some sensitivity and extra time; for example a bereaved relative, a patient who is feeling suicidal or a mum who is worried about her newborn child.

## **How you can help your GP to run to time.**

- Please respect our one appointment, one problem policy. Do not bring a list to the doctor.
- We request one patient only per appointment. We cannot discuss other family members.
- Please do not ask your doctor for repeat prescriptions in the consultation. We have a process for this. Obviously if you have problems attending regularly then please let your doctor know first.
- Please inform your doctor at the beginning what the problems are, and your doctor can help you decide which to discuss first and what can be brought back at a later date.
- Please attend appropriately dressed and remove your outer wear. For example for babies and patient attending for their chest to be listened to or for blood pressure taking.
- Please switch off your mobile phone.
- Please ensure you have checked in using the computer screen or at the reception desk. Your GP will not know you are here unless you do.
- Please arrive on time for your appointment and let us know if you are running late. Your GP may be able to reorganise things a little.
- If the doctor is running late, please be patient and understanding. We will not tolerate any aggression towards our reception staff. They have no control over this.