

FUNDING OF EQUIPMENT AT YOUR SURGERY

It is not an unusual sight in certain organisations to see a collection box placed in a central area in an attempt by that organisation to collect funds in order to either fulfil or expand its role/service to the population it serves.

In General Practice this used to happen until the distant 'powers that be' felt that a collection box was tantamount to the coercing an unwitting public to part with their money and the practice was outlawed.

Today, The Crawley Down Surgery still has an equipment fund although the 'box' has gone and as the fund cannot be advertised it has to rely upon direct contributions to the practice.

You could be forgiven for wondering why an equipment fund is needed at all. Surely the NHS supplies practices with all the equipment it needs to fulfil its many varied roles? Unfortunately this is not the case due to the fact that GP's are self employed and contract to the NHS rather than being employed by it.

As a result practices throughout the country vary enormously as to the quality, breadth and type of equipment on offer which directly affects the services they are able to provide.

At Crawley Down I believe we are fortunate in what we have available at our disposal. For example we have 24 hour blood pressure machines for accurate hypertension diagnosis, spirometry for assessment of respiratory conditions, pulse oximeters to determine blood oxygen content and medical grade fridges to store a wide range of vaccinations and travel immunisations. Also, we often have more than one item of a particular type of equipment available. Thus, when tests are required and equipment fails, or needs servicing, patient delays can be kept to a minimum.

However, presently we are in a period of continued reduction in investment into General Practice and it is not always easy or appropriate to divert routine practice income to purchasing new or renewing old equipment particularly if it is 'non-essential' or currently not broken.

We have been very fortunate over the years to receive generous donations from individuals and patient groups. One example of a previous individual donation enabled us to purchase a 24 hour blood pressure monitor long before they were seen as essential pieces of equipment. Other local practices didn't get one themselves until sometime after we had ours. More recently a donation from the patient group 'Zipper Club' (Heart bypass group) allowed us to purchase an ECG machine without which patients would still be having to attend the Queen Victoria Hospital to have this test performed.

'Help us to help you get the best out of your General Practice experience'. We hope that you would agree with this simple motto.

We would like to thank those that have already contributed and to those who may do so in the future. We would very much like to maintain and improve our services to

patients and we realise that having an equipment fund for patients and patient groups to contribute to has a significant impact on us being able to do this.

Dr. D. Jefferies

5th Nov 2013