

Appreciating The patient experience: An anthology.

KCL Clinical Humanities

The Medical Students of Rushey Green Group Practice



Contents

Foreword.....	2
General Practice.....	3
Hypertension.....	7
Immunisation.....	11
Upper Respiratory Tract Infection.....	15
Depression.....	19
Diabetes.....	23
General Checkup.....	27
Arthritis.....	31
Back Pain.....	35
Prescription Request.....	39
Lipid Disorder.....	43

Foreword

From the offset we knew we wanted to create a project that exposed a different perspective on medicine. As medical students we are bombarded with statistics, NICE guidelines and gold standard treatments, but it is only with clinical experience that one begins to develop how these are shaped around an individual: the patient. Since beginning clinical placement this year, we have been continually struck by the stories patients tell us, and the courage it takes to share them. This anthology aims to explore common presentations in general practice through the eyes of the patient. We looked not only at the blood pressure reading on the sphygmomanometer, but also how it feels to be told it is going in the right direction. We read not about the dosage used in medications for treating addiction, but the struggle of walking hours to go and collect them. With the help of Care Opinion, we have used real patient accounts and produced haikus that reflect their experiences in the NHS. We hope there are details in here you find you can relate to or disagree with, laugh or frown at, but most importantly that make you think about what it felt to be that person. The patient experience is at the heart of medicine, and at the heart of this project.

Madeleine Noelle Olding

The Best GP

General Practice

*In an award for
'Best GP', I'd vote for you
over and over!*



I really want to thank my GP.

My GP, Dr J, is the best GP ever. She has done so much for me in the last few months and has really helped and supported me.

If there was an award for GP of the year then I would nominate Dr J over and over until she won, as she deserves recognition for the excellent job she does.

Thank you. Xxx

<https://www.careopinion.org.uk/opinions/61194>

They Need to Know How a Patient Feels

General Practice

*How will you know what
to diagnose if I can't
finish my story?*



I feel that one of the doctors at Porterbrook Medical Centre in Sheffield has poor communication skills. I felt bad for choosing to see this doctor. They had no time for listening and gave a diagnosis before I even finished my story.

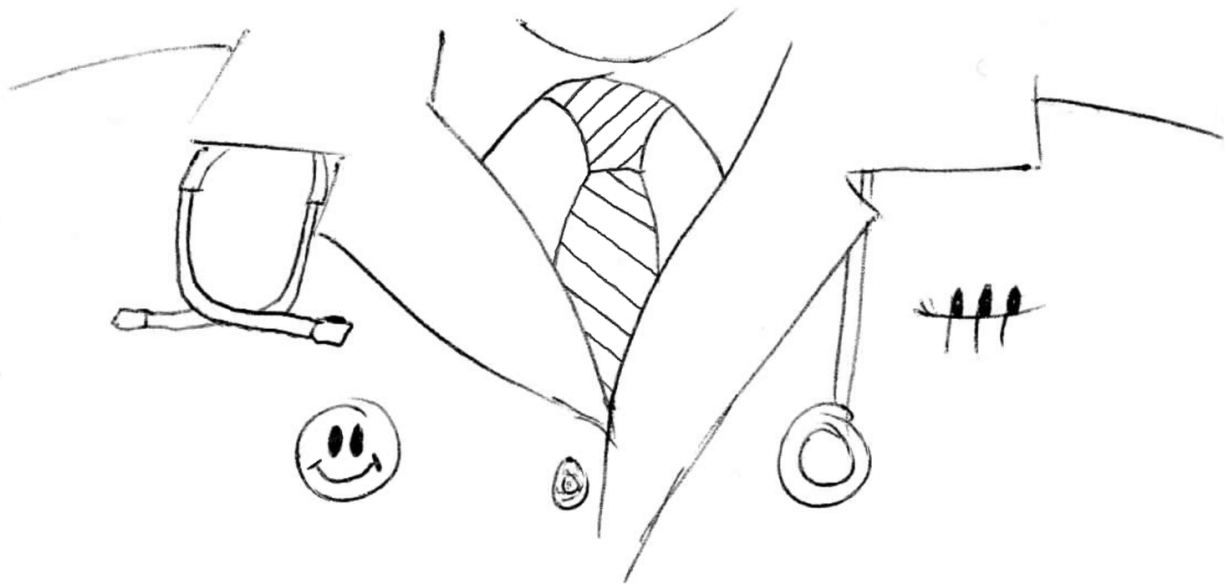
They need to know how the patient feels. I believe I am not the only one who complains about them.

<https://www.careopinion.org.uk/opinions/53367>

Taking the Time

Hypertension

*White Coat Anxiety.
Staff could not be more helpful,
given time to calm down.*



Whether by phone or face-to-face the reception staff are friendly, polite, respectful, listen with empathy and could not be more helpful, if they tried, so to speak.

I have had the same experience with 'my' GP. I also need to add that I have always had an appointment within a week to see 'my' GP; on one occasion I was given the option of a telephone call by my GP (on time, needless to say), which led to seeing them on the same day. 'My' GP's treatment of me is excellent - time is taken to let me calm down (white-coat anxiety sufferer with hypertension here!), several readings are taken and results/treatments discussed, while also having a little chat, just like with the less scientifically (?) minded family doctors 'of old'. The ease of access to a named doctor, etc., also speaks very well of a highly competent practice manager, in my opinion.

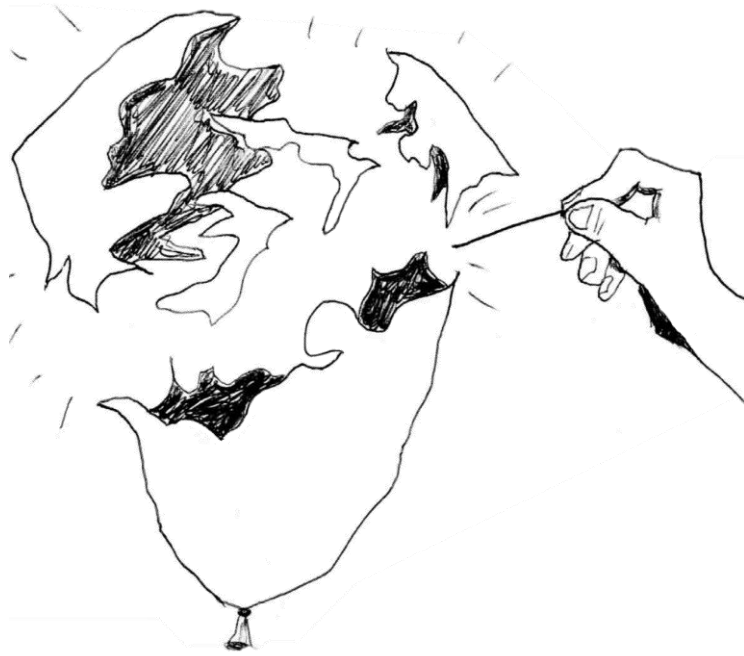
Finally, and most importantly - a huge THANK YOU ALL SO VERY MUCH - to everybody at St. Vincent & The Hollybush surgeries for everything you have done for me over the years - nobody could have looked better after me!!

<https://www.careopinion.org.uk/opinions/455907>

Atrovastatin, Simvastatin, Rosuvastatin

Hypertension

*Cheap blood pressure pills
don't "rise to the occasion",
doctors try to lie.*



In Jan 2018, seen by the male doctor. I had had extensive tests done in Thailand in Dec 2017 and a consultant gave me the latest blood pressure tablet available Valsartan, as the two I was on were not working to lower it enough: also the cheap statin I was on Atrovastatin gave me a high reading of bad L.D.L cholesterol was 4.19 whereas the recommended max is 2.58. The consultant in Thailand changed my statin to Crestor (rosuvastatin) as for over 12 months I had swollen feet than forced me to get size 11 house slippers instead of size 9, and I could not wear socks in outdoor shoes. The male doctor refused to even look at my Thailand consultant's test results and drug changes, telling me that the NHS always take no notice of non-NHS tests, he sent me packing after a mere 2 mins to go for a blood test. Tests in 2006 in Thailand found that the statin I was then on (Simvastatin) also did not suit me. It gave side effects of aching joints, poor sleep so tired all day long, and no willpower to do gardening and D.I.Y, and sex not possible as failure to 'rise to the occasion' probably due to cheap blood pressure tablets. I was then at The Mansfield Medical Centre and changed to Malling after years of them refusing to put me on Crestor, who also refused but put me on Altrovastatin that has the same bad side effects. During 2017 I contacted Malling several times to try to see a doctor to change to Crestor as my feet swelling almost stopped me from driving safely. I was only usually offered telephone consultations, that made the mobile ring for 3 seconds. It was not possible to get the phone out in time to respond to the incoming call, when I called back the doctor was calling someone else. I went down the surgery to ask the reception to request a longer period of ring tone so people had time to respond, there was no promise to act. The male doctor in my appointment January 2018 told me a lie in that Valsartan has been available in the UK for over 10 years, the truth is that GPs can only give it on a private prescription as the top drug UK agency (NICE) are still considering approving it and will decide in May 2018 if it can be prescribed on the NHS. However, in its strongest 160 mg form it costs £3 daily so may not get approval. The statins mentioned above cost £4 a month, until recent years Crestor (rosuvastatin) was £40 a month, now much less as when a new drug becomes available for several years it has a higher price to pay for the research & development costs. This period has now elapsed, so other companies make it at a far cheaper cost that the NHS can afford. What Malling do not know is that for many years I have had a friend who has lodged at my house that is a professor of Genetics and Micro- biology, who teaches at a Midlands University who has a brother who is a GP so any attempts by GPs to give me wrong information can be easily detected. I take BP readings and record it twice a day so doctors have a true picture.

<https://www.careopinion.org.uk/opinions/461651>

Creative Communication and Non-Gendered Stickers

Immunisation

Who knew MMR vaccines turn pink? My daughter hardly noticed the jab...



I have been telling everyone else so thought I ought to also tell you about the brilliant experience we had last week at Caversham getting my nearly 3 year old's flu and MMR vaccines.

I'm afraid I didn't get the nurse's name (but we were in Ms Tobin's room, so it may well have been her) but she was absolutely fantastic. Very positive, very kind and creative in her communication with my daughter (e.g. getting her interested in seeing the MMR vaccine turn pink) and extremely quick in the actual delivery of the vaccine. I also really appreciated the non-gendered stickers available (not the case with our NHS dentist unfortunately).

I just felt the nurse gave the best service I could have imagined, and really made it a much more manageable experience than it might have been. Having taken my daughter for private vaccinations previously I was also struck by how much more professional things were at the Caversham.

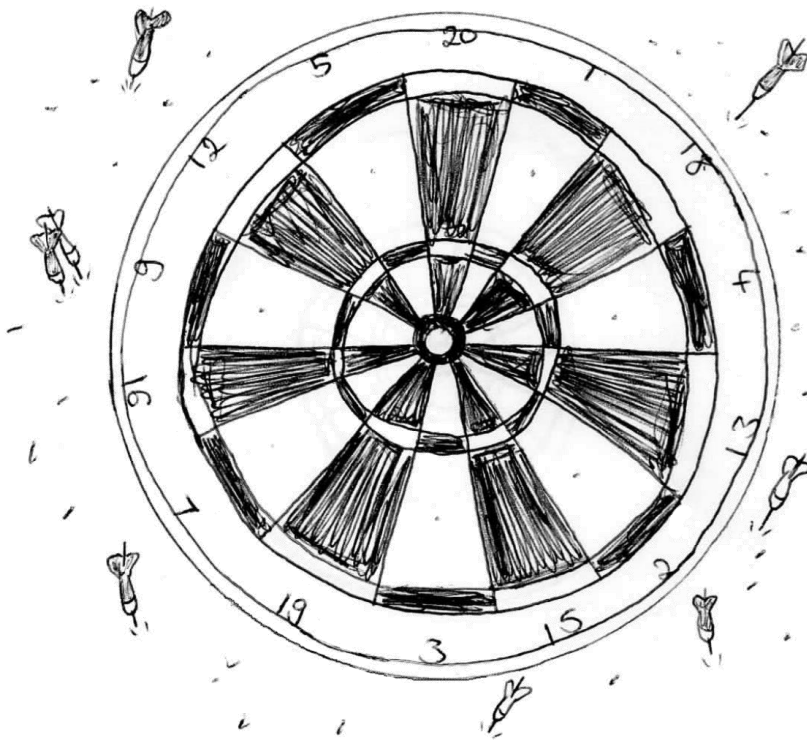
Thank you so much.

<https://www.careopinion.org.uk/opinions/408441>

23 Days

Immunisation

*Ready and waiting?
Sometimes hit but mostly miss.
Who has my records?*



Sometimes hit but mostly miss.

I have had to get my immunisation records twice from this surgery and on both separate occasions I was not informed that they were ready and waiting for me. It was only after me phoning two weeks after paying the £10 apparently required that I found out they were waiting for me, even though both times I made them aware that I needed them in a timely manner and it was very important.

On the most recent occasion, the receptionist who took the original payment was very friendly and polite, which is a rarity. I've worked in another health centre and work in another healthcare setting currently, so I understand how busy it can be. However, when it is a simple quick task that is of urgency for the patient, to not take the 30 seconds required to phone or leave a message is ridiculous.

From when I applied to me phoning and collecting it was 23 days. The document was ready to collect the day after I paid for it. This massive delay is unnecessary and unacceptable. It cannot be justified, but it's not worth complaining to the staff, as they don't care.

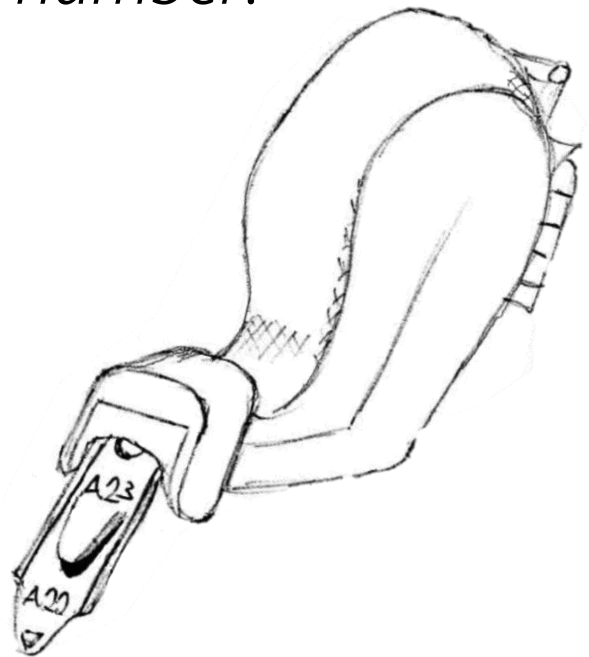
<https://www.careopinion.org.uk/opinions/358784>

Not just a Number

Upper Respiratory Tract Infection

Symptom: hard to breathe.

*They are interested in me,
not just a number!*



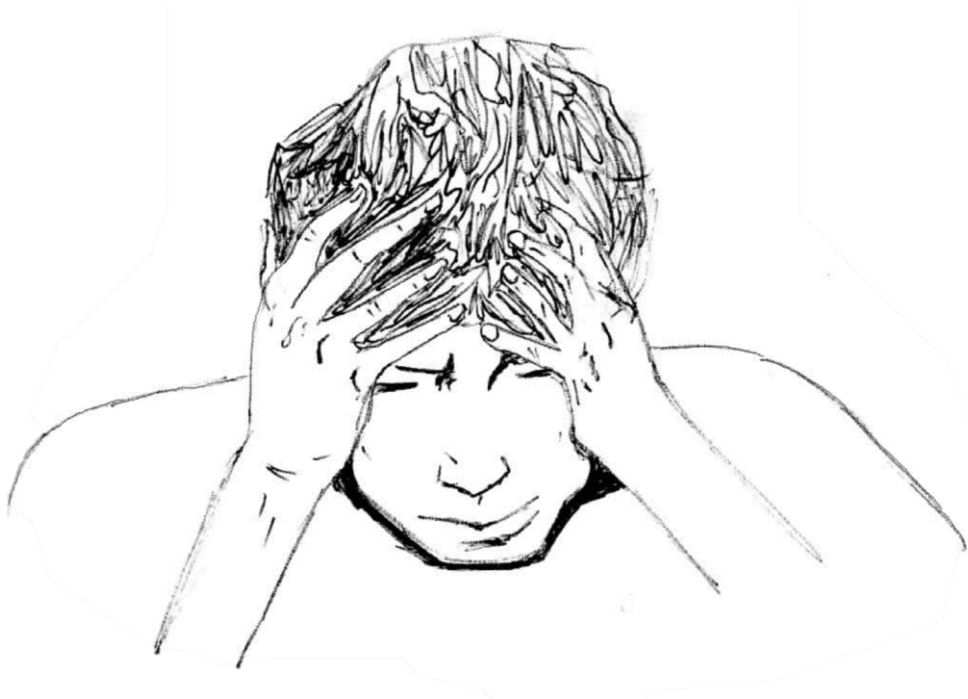
I have been struggling with sinusitis for some time now - the main symptom being difficulty breathing. I have an appointment booked for December 2nd but my breathing was becoming unmanageable, so the ENT department fitted me in last Monday afternoon. I was treated with total respect and care by both the nurse who greeted me and the doctor (specialist) I saw. The overall impression I was left with was that they were genuinely interested in me and I wasn't just a number. My two daughters were allowed in with me and both commented on how well we were all treated.

<https://www.careopinion.org.uk/opinions/252309>

I'll Never Go There Again

Upper Respiratory Tract Infection

*Extremely bad pain,
Doctor said he felt the same,
uncaring and cold.*



I went to this clinic through 111 as I was really ill with chronic sinusitis and rhinitis with extremely bad pains in my ears on top of flu. I also have a fibromyalgia and disability.

The doctor did not want to know and kept telling me that they felt the same. I explained how bad I was, and it was giving me flare ups in my fibromyalgia and I couldn't function with the pressure of sinuses as I've had 3 broken noses and sometimes need steroid inhaler as my right sinus was crushed and doesn't drain well. Again, we are all the same I was told you have to wait it out. I explained it's been over four weeks. The doctor when examining my ears was very rough. The same treatment when checking temperature, the pain was unbearable and it was mean and cold hearted to treat me like this. By this time I felt very upset that they clearly wasn't well enough to be there if they felt as bad as me which I was told five times. If they did they wouldn't be able to function and treat patients. They also clearly didn't want to be there. I was disgusted with their uncaring behaviour.

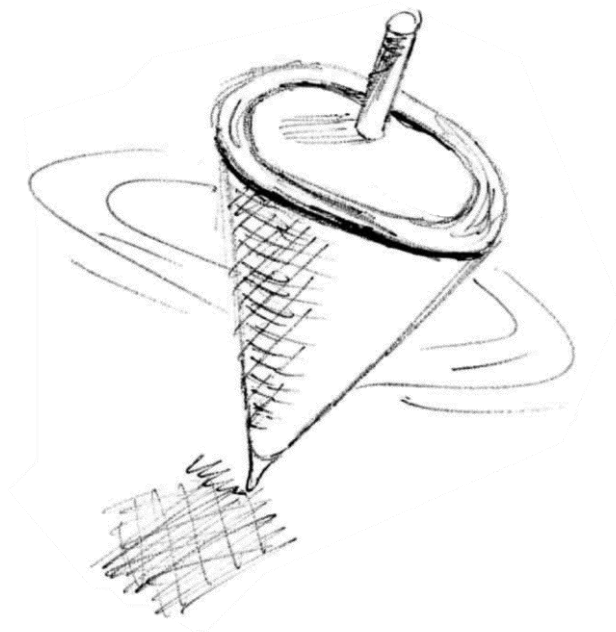
The good news is my own doctor diagnosed rhinitis and infection of the sinus which had built up due to pressure and build up from my passages not being able to drain. I have been given antibiotics and inhaler. My doctor looked up my nose with a light to see how red and sore it was also top of my throat which this doctor failed to do. Showing rhinitis. I will never go there again and the doctor I saw needs reporting which I am going to do. I'm not allowed to say who it was on here so I've tried my best do that this gets put on here.

<https://www.careopinion.org.uk/opinions/456611>

Giving My Life Back

Depression

*Never 'good enough',
but fair treatment and respect
turned my life around.*



I have been with many treatment services over the years but I have found that the best has been the service I am with now, I have been treated like a person and been given fair treatment and respect which is a thing that I have never found until now.

I have had social services on my case for a long a I can remember and we never seemed to get anywhere. This drove me to despair as everything I tried to do was never 'good enough'.

My depression got the better of me in 2016 when I made plans to end my life by jumping from a bridge, this was bought on by my wife leaving me for another woman.

I have found that the support I have received from inclusion and my key worker has helped me to turn my life around, I no longer have social services on my back and the future is looking good for me and my kids.

I plan to become a peer mentor in the near future and who knows where this will take me. Thank you for everything but mostly for giving me my life back.

<https://www.careopinion.org.uk/opinions/469071>

All I Received was Judgement

Depression

Told I 'looked okay'...

No empathy, caused self-harm...

No one checked on me...



I was admitted on to the Coity Clinic. I was having very suicidal episodes and I was diagnosed with severe post-natal depression.

I was put here so I could be safe and receive help but all I received was judgement and lack of empathy. I was often told by staff that I looked well, as a trained mental health nurse, I would hope they realise that mental health doesn't necessarily affect how you look. At this point, I hadn't showered in two weeks and I was just shutting myself in my room.

I repeatedly asked for my PRN as I could feel a bad episode coming on but because I was able to chat with my partner and appeared to look OK, I didn't need it. I then proceeded to self harm just to release the anger and hurt I felt. They caught me doing this and did nothing. They did not even take two minutes of their time to see if I was OK.

I am not an uneducated person, I know my rights. I'm a university student who unfortunately is suffering through no fault of my own and the "help" I have received has been detrimental at best.

They discharged me at the end of the week, despite me having suicidal tendencies and basically I was left in the hands of the home treatment team who were very similar to the staff in this ward.

<https://www.careopinion.org.uk/opinions/474290>

Some Appreciation

Diabetes

*Showing compassion
makes having diabetes
bearable - thank you!*



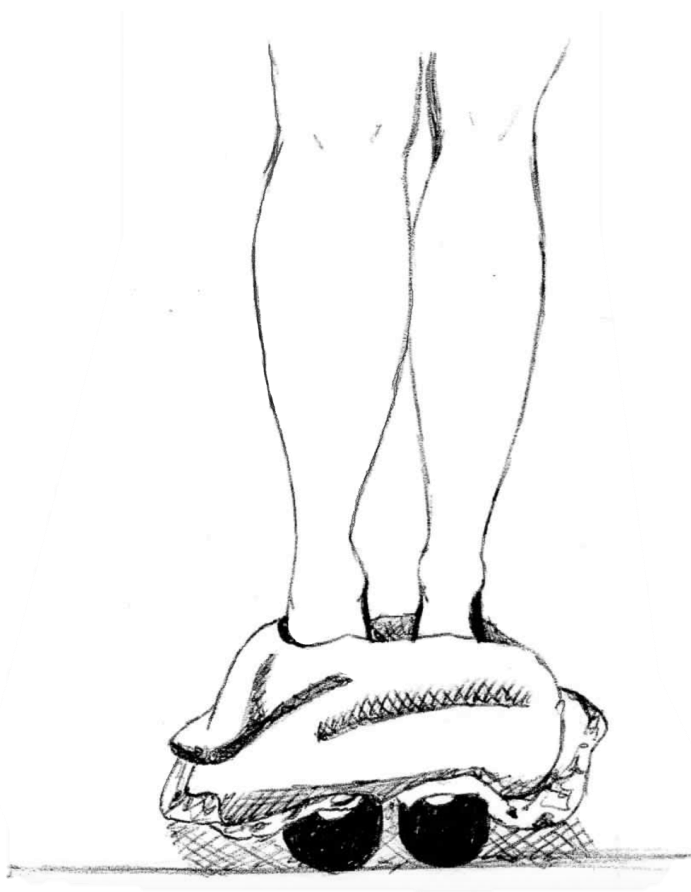
I have been under the care of the diabetic team at the Royal Surrey for a while but I really feel they need some appreciation. In particular my diabetic nurse goes above and beyond every time I see her. This nurse reacts quickly and compassionately and I honestly feel she makes having diabetes bearable. Thank you all for always making me feel safe and comfortable!

<https://www.careopinion.org.uk/opinions/481483>

A Very Private Person

Diabetes

"Just drop your trousers"
Felt embarrassed and distressed
I started to cry



I have been attending the Treatment Centre for many years and treated with care and respect but on this occasion, it was very different. My appointment was for 1pm and as always I fasted before my procedure as outlined in the correspondent for someone with diabetes. Now the gateway was changed from the normal gateway and the admission procedure was different in that I was sent back into the general waiting area. I was waiting several hours before being called back into the gateway. I mentioned to the nurse that admitted me that I was diabetic and that I had nothing to eat for a very long time and that I was feeling that my blood sugars were dropping. The response that I got was "well the woman in there is a diabetic as well and I suggest you tell the doctor in there" then to take a seat, which I did. I then asked "where will I be changing in to a gown?" (as this is what I have always done, as my procedure is to my lower spine) The reply was "you can get changed if you want" (with a snigger from the nurse) but not shown where to change.

When called into the treatment room I told the staff how I was feeling re blood sugar dropping, I was asked if I wanted to go ahead with my procedure and I said "yes I will do after waiting". I then asked what I should do with my bag, coat and walking stick, I was told just to put everything on the floor as there's nowhere else (I wasn't happy having to do this, but did anyway). At this point I am still fully clothed and asked where do I change into a gown the reply was "you don't: just drop your trousers to your knees". I found having to do this in front of everybody was very distressing and very disrespectful. I'm a 53 year old woman and a very private person thus feeling the way I did. Obviously I wasn't feeling great re blood sugars dropping and embarrassed. I started to cry while having my procedure, I was asked if I was ok and I replied "no not really, which I hope you understand". I was told that there was no need for me not to eat or drink in the future and that I should go and eat lots of sugary foods. Some people may think that I'm reacting over the top, but I left very emotional, embarrassed and amazed on how I had been treated on this occasion. I have always been treated very differently in gateway G and have always given them five stars but unfortunately that isn't the case for gateway C on this occasion.

<https://www.careopinion.org.uk/opinions/465990>

Genuine Concern

General Checkup

*Welcomed away from fear
Comforted with real concern
Appreciated*



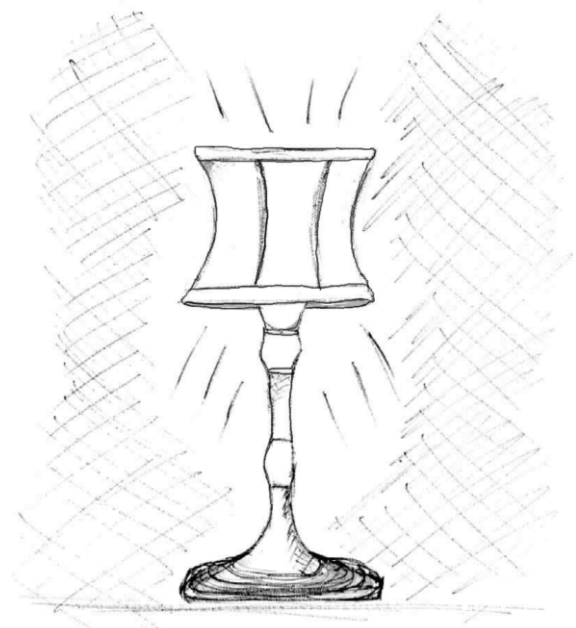
The STI clinic at queens to me is exceptional. I've been to this clinic for general checkup over a number of years. The reception is welcoming and the nurses, health advisors and doctors are genuine in their concern and sexual health advisory. I've read some of the comments but truth be told in respect to professionalism and care team 5 is better by far compared to my previous experience at another STI clinic. Their genuine concern is what attracts me most.

<https://www.careopinion.org.uk/opinions/256630>

Major Changes Needed

General Checkup

*Left in the dark - why?
Alone without any updates.
Aren't health fears enough?*



My partner is in ward 44 and yesterday I was there for 6/7 hours. during that time we were left completely alone apart from bloods taken once, not even a general check to see how she is (in a lot of pain). After numerous attempts to see a nurse for some different painkillers we had no answer which is unacceptable. I woke this morning to hear nothing had changed through the night apart from her paracetamol was changed to a drip so she is still in pain. Then ibuprofen was given even though she was told not to take it as it can inflame the stomach more.

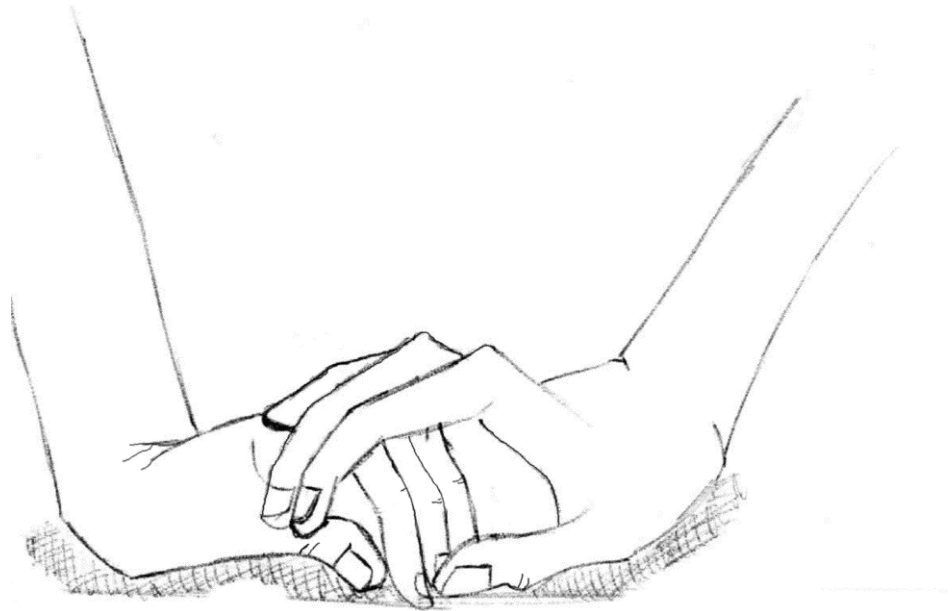
I appreciate there is an under staffing issue but it doesn't mean to be left in the dark for almost a day. Major changes needed.

<https://www.careopinion.org.uk/opinions/470913>

Counting Myself Blessed

Arthritis

*Pain makes me feel low,
but with kind supportive staff
I count myself blessed.*



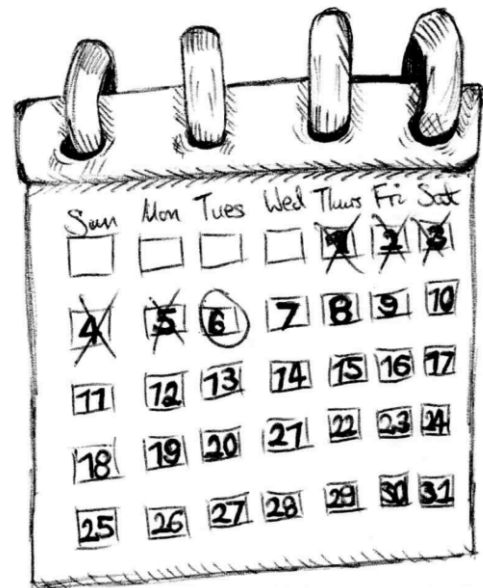
I have severe osteoarthritis in all my joints. Every consultant I have met and their secretaries have treated me with the utmost kindness, brilliant support and the latest cutting edge treatment and professionalism. I count myself very blessed to be a patient of this wonderful hospital. Sometimes pain has made me feel quite low but each member of staff makes an effort to alleviate this and treat me with dignity. This hospital works incredibly hard, from the receptionists, porters onwards and thank you everyone for improving my health and making my patient experience a brilliant one.

<https://www.careopinion.org.uk/opinions/440144>

30 Seconds

Arthritis

*Five months physio,
"Can't help until you've had six".
Appointment finished.*



6 months ago I was told to try physiotherapy to help with my osteoarthritis (approx. 3 minutes with consultant)

5 months ago receive my first appointment for physiotherapy

Today 27/12 - Waited over an hour for my appointment

I told the nurse I need to leave as I was due back at work 30 minutes ago but wanted it noted that I had arrived - the nurses said "you've 2 people ahead of you", I said I can't wait any longer. They "slotted" me in next, the other people in the waiting room arrived after me so can't help but think what is the point of appointment times. The system was definitely prioritised for major first, I am minor.

When I finally saw the consultant - "Did you start physio? See you in 6 months? Can't help you until you've completed 6 months physio"

Then what was the point in have an appointment! They've wasted both mine and the NHS's time! Not joking the consultant spoke to me for less than 30 seconds before I left.

Then I had to pay £3.60 for what was ultimately a 30 second consultation and I now have to make up the time at work!

Last year for the same clinic I had a phone call to say they were running ahead of schedule so could come earlier ... if there is such a delay why not call me to say set out later?!

<https://www.careopinion.org.uk/opinions/453426>

For the First Time in Years

Back Pain

*Had my op, went well
Now no pain or stick! Thanks all
You are in good hands.*



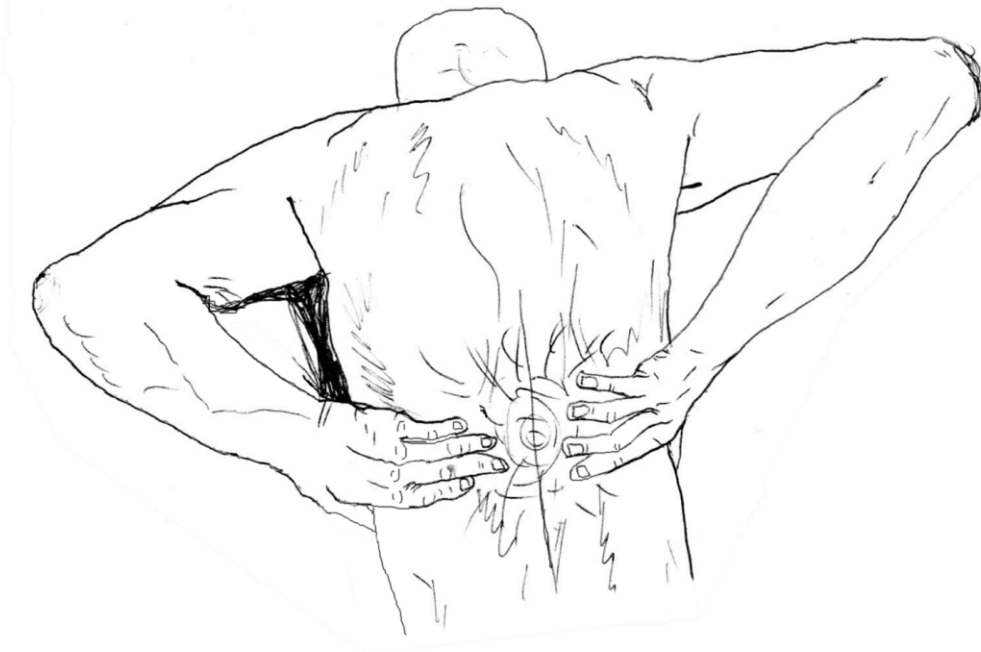
After years of suffering from severe back pain I finally had my operation yesterday for decompression and discectomy by a surgeon and their team. I went for my op at 9am and back on the ward at 12pm. All went well and I was discharged at 3pm. For the first time in years I walked out of the hospital without pain and my walking stick: I would say to anyone having the same op or similar not to worry as you are in good hands with all the staff from being admitted to being discharged. A huge thank you to all.

<https://www.careopinion.org.uk/opinions/446434>

Pain Management?

Back Pain

*Back pain X-rayed
Future - no confidence
Delayed, heard nothing*



I attended the pain management clinic for lower back pain and was X-rayed at the time of my visit. The consultant said he would look at the radiograph and call me with his decision on how to proceed.

After two weeks I had heard nothing, and as I saw the resulting image myself whilst I was in the radiography section, I called to see what the delay was. I was told that "it could be up to two weeks before the results were received by the consultant".

As the radiographs were taken no more than 20 metres from the pain clinic, I find this an incredible delay, especially as the images are available on-line. I am not filled with any confidence that I will receive any treatment in the foreseeable future...

<https://www.careopinion.org.uk/opinions/451451>

Suffering in Silence

Prescription Request

*They did not shame me
for the problem in my pants
They found the right drug.*



I had suffered in silence for some time. I had heard about Conifer House being a place where they test for HIV etc. I was expecting to be embarrassed, shamed and belittled.

I was met at reception with a cheerful good morning, at each encounter with reception staff they were smiling and pleasant. I began to relax. I filled out the form and was referred to another floor.

It took time to be seen but when I got to see the doctor I was assessed, given appropriate tests, the results arrived back within 30 mins and the rest 7 days later. I am very sensitive to medication and they were aware of contra indications: they got a second opinion before writing a prescription. I was given further appointment times until all my symptoms had gone. They did not discharge me until I was given the all clear. They did not embarrass, shame or belittle me.

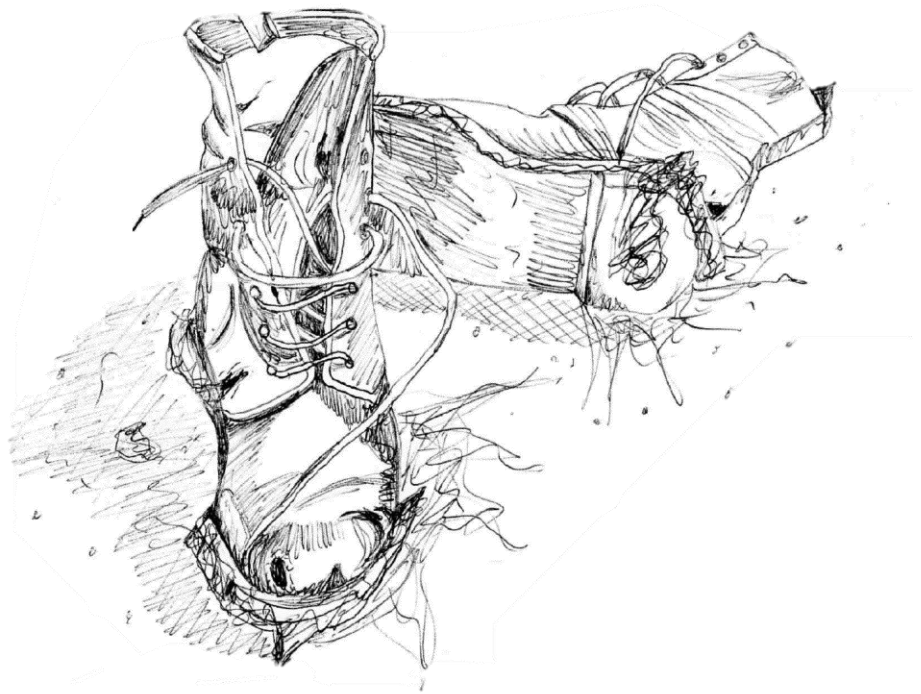
All staff are professional and have knowledge and skills much better than the general hospital gynecology department. Without their help and support through treatment I would still be suffering silence. I now recommend their services to everyone who has a problem in their pants.

<https://www.careopinion.org.uk/opinions/42605>

On and On

Prescription Request

*Stress made me relapse.
A five hour walk full circle, to
treat my addiction*



My script to treat my addiction is provided by Guernsey House. One time it hadn't been posted so I rang up to explain and they were really understanding. They sent it in a taxi to my pharmacist. The second time it happened, one of the doctors said he wouldn't fax it or send it in a taxi. He said I had to come in for it and do a sample, if I didn't I would lose my script. It took me five hours to walk here and back, and because I was so stressed I ended up relapsing. I think you should be given all your scripts when you leave, as my doctor has done today.

<https://www.careopinion.org.uk/opinions/19251>

Handshake

Lipid Disorder

*Attention is paid
Decisions about my care
Are made by me too*



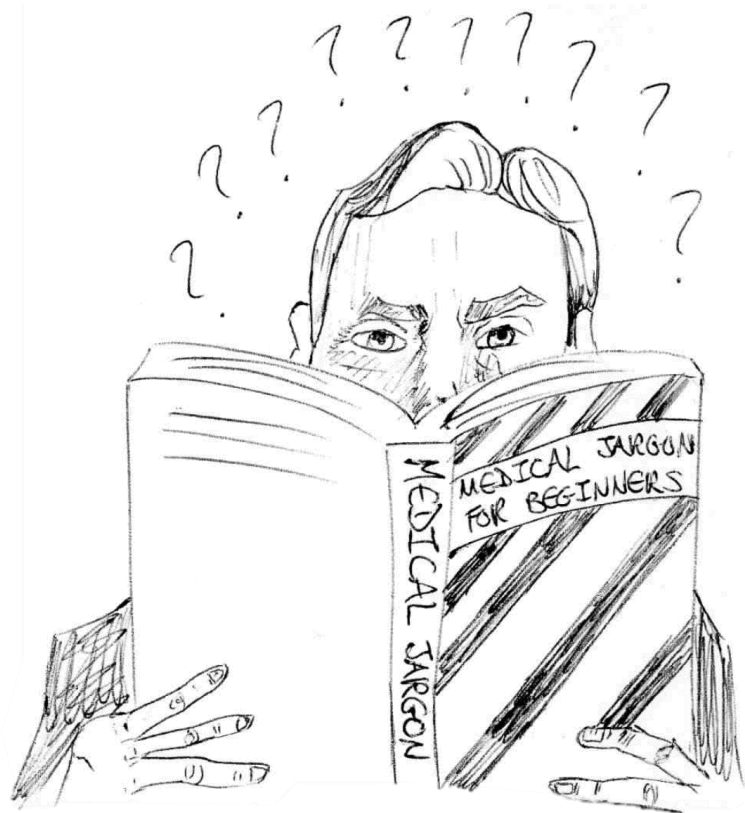
I recently attended an outpatient appointment at the lipid clinic. I was extremely impressed with all the staff who were efficient, caring and organised. I felt that I was fully involved with all the decisions about my care and that time was taken to explain why a particular approach was being recommended.

<https://www.careopinion.org.uk/opinions/174864>

Medically Minded

Lipid Disorder

*I don't have a clue
About 'lipid' or 'renal'
I'm just a patient*



I was asked to come in for a blood test and was told the results will be sent to me by Sims. Only one result came through which said my HbA1c was normal. Well, I don't have a medical background so I haven't a clue what this test was so had to google it to find out it was for sugar levels.

A week later I hadn't had the other results so I tried to phone the practice but couldn't get through so came to the surgery, asked the receptionist who told me the doctors were having to review the other results. Naturally I was concerned. When I did have a text with the results I was told renal and lipid results were acceptable!

Again not being a medical person I didn't have a clue what lipid meant so back to Google to find out it was for cholesterol. So what is acceptable? We are told to know our numbers. These results meant nothing to me, so now do I just wait for another year for my next test to see if it has gone to being unacceptable?

No help to me whatsoever I am only a patient. Perhaps we could be told the results in a manner that we understood without having to go to Google, and perhaps I could be informed if there was anything I can do to improve the results. Just left now has a worried patient. I know doctors say they are so busy and haven't got the time for us but it wouldn't take much more time to get this one right.

<https://www.careopinion.org.uk/opinions/479703>

Acknowledgements

Edited by Madeleine Olding and Christina Louca

Illustrations by Dunya Najat and Abdullah Khawaja

Poetry by Madeleine Olding, Dunya Najat, Christina Louca, Yogita Shanmugharaj, Sydney Rodrigues, Sofia Pinto, Fizza Qureshi, Raven Owie and Huma Kiani

With very special thanks to <https://www.careopinion.org.uk/>

Thank you for reading!