

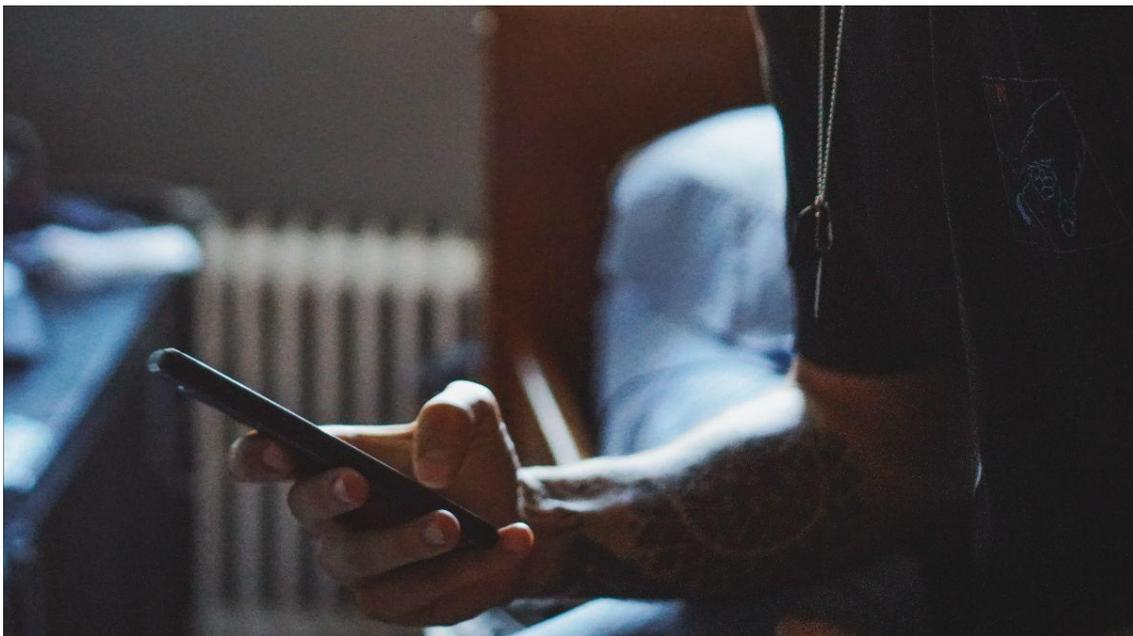
Welcome to the Patients Association's Weekly News

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The new normal worries patients and GPs



A couple of weeks ago in the newsletter we reported on several calls our helpline had received from people concerned that their GP practice had not yet gone back to offering face-to-face appointments, which they would prefer.

We advised them on what they could do to encourage their practice to open up but then last week, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care Matt Hancock announced that all GP appointments should be done remotely by default unless a patient needs to be seen in person.

Speaking at a meeting organised by the Royal College of Physicians in London, the Secretary of State noted the huge increase in online consultations during the lockdown and welcomed this change. “So from now on, all consultations should be tele-consultations unless there’s a compelling clinical reason not to,” Hancock said.

Since then, our helpline has had more calls from patients worried about the move to 'digital by default'. One caller said that in her area patients are expected to make hospital appointments online, after referral, and print out the confirmation. The caller was concerned that not everyone had printers at home. Another caller said she was "horrified" that the Secretary of State thought patients would welcome the change. "From the patient's point of view, you have to trust the GP to be able to discuss intimate or mental health problems. Patients have to know the GP in the first instance," she said.

From the Patients Association's point of view, we are concerned that a wholesale move to virtual first and face-to-face exceptionally consultations appears not to be based on evidence of what works for patients. This was one of the points our Chief Executive Rachel Power made in several media interviews last week.

Rachel pointed out that we're hearing from patients who are anxious that their GPs will never reopen fully. We also know that the shift to online and phone consultations and triage hasn't worked for everyone.

Rachel also pointed out that patients have put up with a great deal over recent months to help the NHS cope with COVID-19, but the sweeping changes could not be allowed to become the new normal without at least some modification to ensure they meet all patients' needs.

We will continue to advocate for patients as the NHS opens up. We will work to ensure that barriers to access are not erected against patients who prefer not to use digital contact methods. The NHS's services must be made available in a way that works for patients, not just for itself.

Call for patients to help with informed consent forms



EIDO Healthcare provides treatment-specific informed consent patient information documents for 50% of NHS Trusts and 80% of private hospitals.

The company aims to support hospitals to achieve excellence in informed consent. It has asked the Patients Association to help ensure its resources are patient-centred so we're looking for a small group of patients to review some of EIDO Healthcare's patient information resources. The group will be asked to provide recommendations for how EIDO could and should develop future documents from a patient perspective.

The tasks will involve one or two short Zoom sessions and some on-line activity, so no travelling is involved. The time commitment will be around six hours across four weeks in September/ October. Participants must be available for the introductory Zoom session on the afternoon of Thursday 10th September 2020. Participants will be rewarded with a £100 shopping voucher for their time.

If you would like to be part of this project, please email Diane Davies to register your interest **by 23rd August 2020** via the button below.

[Register your interest](#)

Feedback sought on our strategic review



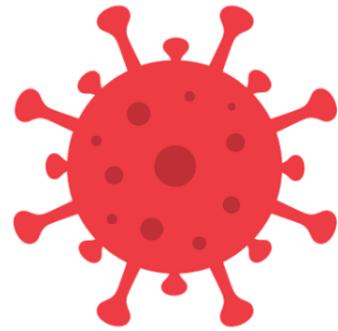
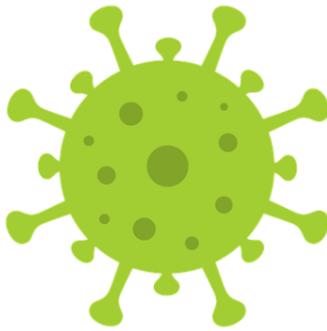
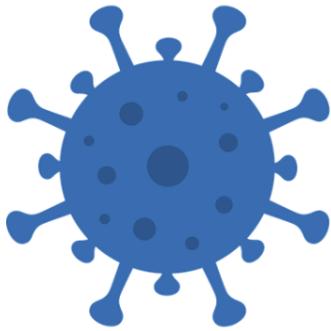
If you are a member of the Association you should now have received details of our strategic review, with the opportunity to share your feedback on our planned future direction.

Our new strategy clarifies our identity, namely that the Patients Association works to ensure that health and care services are designed and delivered through equal partnerships with patients. This is an important evolution in our work: we have always championed safe effective health and social care services delivered in a way that meets the needs of individuals.

But we believe it is critical in the current climate that we work to embed patients as partners in all health and care services. We believe that it is important that patients are part of deciding how services are configured and delivered in the future. If they are not, we fear there is a risk of services being developed in a way that suits the service, not the patient, and that health inequalities will widen.

We want to know what you think; please read [Thriving in an uncertain world](#) and answer the [questions](#).

Last call for our COVID19 survey



Our survey [Understanding Patient Experience During COVID-19](#) will close in the next two weeks. If you've not yet completed it, please do. If you don't want to complete it online, you can call our helpline and one of the advisers will take your answers and record them for you – anonymously. The helpline number, which is free, is 0800 345 7115.

Our analysis of your responses will be shared with the NHS to help it with future planning.

[Take the survey](#)

First call for how background influences access to treatment



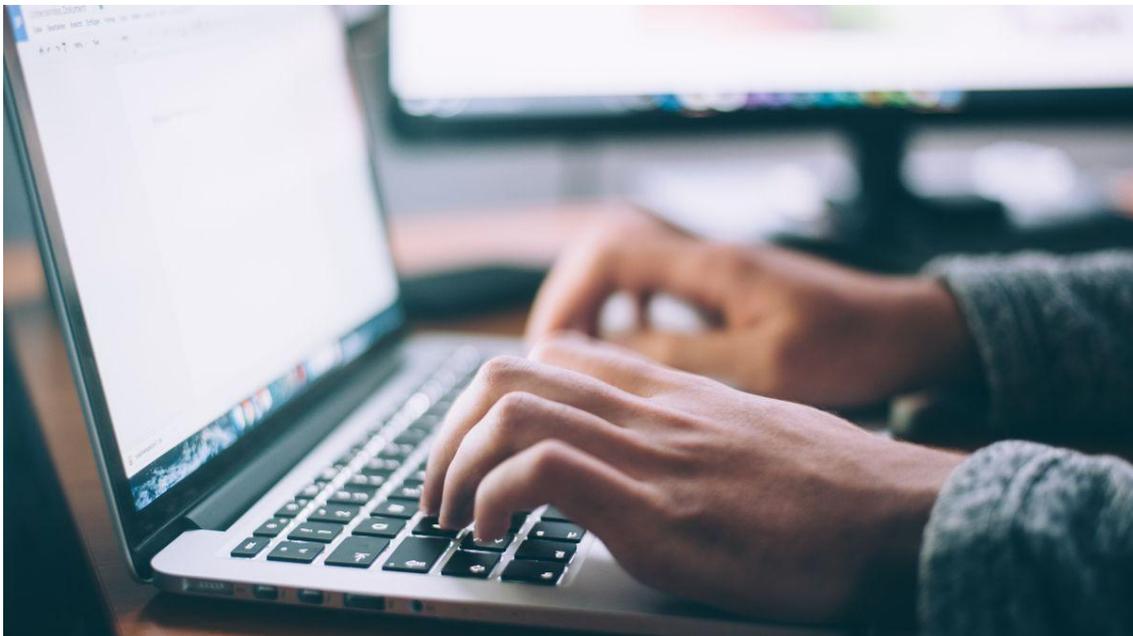
The All Party Parliamentary Group on Stem Cell Transplantation has launched an inquiry looking at how a patient's background can lead to barriers in accessing treatment and care.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed and amplified existing health inequalities. The survey will explore, among other things the influence of a patient's geographical location, socioeconomic background and ethnicity. To take part in the inquiry you can complete a [patient and family survey](#).

The APPG also wants to hear from a range of groups. If you are part of a group with an interest in equity of access to health services then you may want to submit written information too and you can do that [here](#).

The APPG on Stem Cell Transplantation works to inform parliamentarians about the use of stem cell transplantation in saving lives, and to promote the expansion of stem cell donation in the UK.

Independent safety investigators want your opinions on their website



Healthcare Safety Investigation Branch, which conducts independent investigations of patient safety concerns in NHS-funded care across England, is looking for patients' opinions as it redesigns its website

<https://www.hsib.org.uk>.

HSIB would like to know what you think works and what doesn't on website. Your answers will help shape the refreshed website. The [survey](#) should take around 10 minutes to complete.

From the helpline



Escalating costs of private treatment

James* rang from Manchester seeking advice about the costs of private surgical treatment for his daughter Emily.

Emily was seen by a private consultant and scheduled to have two operations. The first surgery has been completed, but James called helpline after noticing the cost of the facilities for the second and final operation had doubled to £4,000. He'd written to the surgeon but had not received a reply.

James wanted to know if the surgeon could justify the increased charges because James was concerned that the increase in costs was the consequence of him having raised concerns about the initial surgery.

Our advice was that James should contact the surgeon again and ask for an explanation about the increased costs. The adviser on our helpline advised Martin to contact the Independent Sector Complaints Adjudication Service (ISCAS) to establish if the surgeon was working in a the hospital that is subscriber to ICAS, and we explained the ISCAS complaints process and how to contact them.

The adviser also explained that if the hospital is not an ISCAS subscriber that James should visit the hospital's website to obtain a copy of its complaints policy and if it's not available online, he should call to ask for it. He should then use the hospital's complaints procedure to raise his concerns.

I advised the caller to contact us if he required additional advice or information.

* Name changed for privacy

What our team is reading this week

[Emerging evidence on health inequalities and COVID-19: July 2020](#)

[How to hug people in a coronavirus-stricken world](#)

[Coronavirus: 'I'm sad or down most days' - the devastating impact of](#)

[Regulating health research and respecting data protection: a global dialogue – Dr Nora Ni Loideain](#)

About Us

Our vision is that health and social care will be delivered in a way that meets every person's health and social care needs.

Our mission is to give effect to the patient voice, to improve patient experience and support people to engage fully in their own care. Find out more about our values on our [website](#).



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