

## Welcome to the Patients Association Weekly News

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### **GP crisis: hundreds of villages lose their GP surgeries**



People in rural and coastal areas are being forced to travel further for GP appointments, with new research showing that more than 1,946 villages are at least three miles from their closest GP practice – 162 more than two years ago. Elderly and vulnerable patients are being hardest hit, with thousands of people across the country being forced to travel ever further for care.

Among the areas hit worst are South Gloucestershire, South Northamptonshire and Cornwall. In the past six years almost two million patients have been affected by 585 surgery closures, according to data analysed by Pulse magazine.

Additional figures from the Department of Transport show there has been a 40 per cent spike in two years in those having to travel for more than an hour by public transport to reach a doctor.

In comments featuring in the [Telegraph](#) (£) and [MailOnline](#), Rachel Power, Chief Executive of the Patients Association said:

“Escalating rates of closures among rural GP practices risk serious consequences for many patients: increased difficulty in securing an appointment, longer waits for people when they have concerns about their health, and greater risks to patient safety. It’s also important to consider the extra financial costs for people having to travel farther, as well as the additional burden for single parents and the extra impact on the environment. These closures could leave patients facing long waits, and push more towards A&E – which will often mean a long journey and quite possibly a long wait when they get there.”

Read more [here](#).

[Read more](#)

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## Making our mark and improving care for patients



We’re incredibly grateful to Boston Scientific, an international company investing in new technologies to improve care, which has this week donated £12,000 to help us support patient education and empowerment activities. The money will go directly to our helpline and advice service, allowing us to develop new online information resources and update our existing leaflets for new audiences.

Just over a month after the Patients Association was recognised at the 2019 [Charity Governance Awards](#), it’s fantastic to have our work for patients celebrated once again. Visit our [website](#) to see our range of patient information and advice resources, including our most-downloaded [‘How to make a complaint’](#) leaflet and [template letter](#).

[Find out more](#)

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## Influence care: join our workshop in Leeds on 19 July

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Have you been switched from a 'biological' medication to a new 'biosimilar' drug? The Patients Association is hosting a workshop in Leeds on 19 July to learn more about how people who are taking these new medicines can be better supported and to understand how their experiences could be improved. This is an exciting and unique opportunity to shape, influence and co-produce guidance directly with clinicians which will help different types of patients to be better equipped to make decisions and will allow them greater control over their own health and wellbeing.

Biologic medications are usually liquids given via a drip or injection pen. They are often used to treat long-term conditions including Crohn's disease, ulcerative colitis, psoriasis and arthritis, but patients with diabetes and people with some forms of cancer may also be taking biologics. Biosimilar drugs work in the same way and are newer versions of the original biological medications.

If you've recently been switched onto a new biosimilar medicine and live in Leeds or the Yorkshire region, we'd love for you to join our workshop on Friday 19 July. The session will run from 10am to 2pm and will explore several themes including:

- What was your experience and how could it have been improved?
- What support would you like to be able to access and how?
- What tools or guides can be designed to make it a better experience for patients in the future?

Your feedback will help to shape our work, and participants will be invited to return for a second workshop later in the year to review and evaluate progress. Places are limited so please contact [anna.shears@patients-association.com](mailto:anna.shears@patients-association.com) for more information and to reserve your place. Lunch and light refreshments will be provided.

See [our website](#) for more opportunities to have your say.

[Read more](#)

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**HSJ Patient Safety Congress 2019**

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# PATIENT SAFETY CONGRESS & AWARDS

## NOrF ANNUAL CONFERENCE

The Patients Association will be at this year's annual HSJ [Patient Safety Congress](#), taking place in Manchester next Tuesday and Wednesday. The Congress brings together over 1,000 delegates each year and is an important annual event for individuals and organisations interested in learning about and improving patient safety.

Rachel Power, Chief Executive of the Patients Association, will join a panel discussion on 'Optimising patient safety through behavioural modification – improving the human factors driving best practice and outcome'. In what promises to be an engaging and informative two days of debate and discussion, other nationally-renowned patient speakers will also be speaking at the Congress, including Sue Jones, Scott Morrish and James Titcombe. You can view the full programme [here](#) and book your place to attend on the Congress [website](#).

[Read more](#)

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## From the helpline: complaint about a GP surgery



Earlier this week we heard from Steven\*, who got in touch to find out more about the complaints process. Steven had been trying for a considerable period of time to book a GP appointment, but was told on each occasion that there were no appointments available. Steven reported to us that at one point the receptionist raised their voice when explaining how the appointment booking process works. Steven asked to speak with the Practice Manager to discuss his concerns and was told by the receptionist that they would pass the message on. In the two weeks that elapsed since this conversation, Steven remained unsuccessful in his efforts to book an appointment and had still not heard from the Practice Manager. He told our helpline that this

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isn't the first time he's had this issue with the practice and wanted help on what to do next.

Our helpline adviser suggested that Steven get in touch with the GP surgery for an update on the Practice Manager's availability. We affirmed that, while the NHS is under pressure with patients across the country experiencing waits for appointments, under no circumstance should a receptionist raise their voice with a patient or speak in a rude manner. We provided the contact details for NHS England in the event that the Practice Manager still fails to contact Steven. We also gave Steven information about the out of hours service in his area, should he need medical attention.

Finally, we directed Steven to the [complaints resources](#) on our website and recommended that he report his bad experience with the [Care Quality Commission](#). If you need health or care advice, call 0208 423 8999 between 9.30 and 5pm on weekdays, or email [helpline@patients-association.com](mailto:helpline@patients-association.com). You can also visit our website to find out more about our helpline, and visit our advice and information leaflets [here](#).

\*Name has been changed

[Contact our helpline](#)



## What our team is reading this week

[Hospitals spend millions to remove flammable cladding](#)

[Hopes raised of cervical cancer eradication](#)

[NHS will force "virtual GPs" to open face-to-face practices in bid to tackle growing](#)

[crisis](#)

[Sandwich manufacturer linked to listeria outbreak is cleared to produce again](#)

[Give children 'less sugar and more veg in baby food'](#)

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## 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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