

Hindon Surgery

Living Well with Cancer and the Falsified Medicines Directive

2019 sees two significant NHS changes that are likely to affect almost everyone.

Cancer treatments have improved and now we have more patients living well with their cancers which is very good news. Following a national re-evaluation of the best way to provide care for cancer patients, Salisbury Hospital will be rolling out a new process for hospital follow-up. In the past many patients had regular hospital visits that confirmed they were well and used up a few minutes of hospital time and half a day for the patient. Now, some patients will be discharged from regular hospital care with a more detailed plan and advice about what symptoms to look out for that might indicate a recurrence. If symptoms occur you would need to see your GP who can refer you back to the specialist to be seen quickly. Your GP may be asked to arrange periodic tests and these will be in your plan. This new system should improve your care, reduce waste, save you time and also put you more in charge of your own condition.

The other major change starting in February is the Falsified Medicines Directive (FMD) – a piece of European legislation, fully endorsed by the UK government, which becomes law on February 9th 2019, whatever happens at the end of March. The idea is good – to have a unique bar code on every sealed pack of medicines that tracks the pack from manufacturer to the patient. The problem is how to do this as bar codes will need scanning at points along the supply chain and that may introduce delays when collecting your medicines from the dispensary or chemist. One problem is that once a drug has been dispensed if it is not collected within seven days it cannot be handed over and must be destroyed. The potential for increased waste of perfectly good medicines is very high. That means ordering medicines close to when you need them and collecting them soon afterwards. So from now on, we would ask that you collect all medicines within 7 days of ordering (leaving us 48 hours to prepare the prescription). Otherwise, we would have to cancel the prescription and put the medication back into the dispensary to avoid wasting the drugs – which is unnecessarily time-consuming. We really appreciate your help with this new legislation.

Dr Patrick Craig-McFeely