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SURGERY DERMATOLOGY OPHTHALMOLOGY

Care Closer to Home

JANUARY 2020 NEWSLETTER

Grange over Sands

It's been an incredibly busy few months since the last newsletter came out in the summer of 2019. Cumbria Medical Services continually strives to provide high quality services in Dermatology, Surgery and Ophthalmology. We currently run clinics from eleven different locations throughout Cumbria including local community hospitals and GP Surgeries. Working in partnership with our NHS colleagues is at the centre of how we operate to enable us to deliver much needed care to patients closer to their homes in the community.

As I mentioned in the last newsletter we had started to run Dermatology clinics in the evenings at Cockermouth Community Hospital. These clinics are much in demand and we are therefore continuing to provide these clinics on a regular weekly basis.

In order to meet the demand for services for patients living in the south of the county, we have recently reached an agreement with Nutwood Medical Practice to run surgical clinics from The Grange Health Centre in Grange over Sands. The first clinic is on 29th January 2020.

Appointments for this clinic can be booked in the usual way via the Choose and Book service. CMS will be offering Carpal Tunnel, Vasectomies and minor skin surgery during these clinic times.

Skin Camouflage Clinics

Changing Faces which is a national charity has up until now supported and managed a volunteer who provides skin camouflage clinics in Cumbria. Changing Faces has decided recently to streamline some services and the clinics they were supporting in Maryport and Carlisle closed at the end of 2019. The implications of this are that all Cumbrian patients would have to travel to Newcastle or Manchester for their nearest clinic from January 2020 onwards.

With this in mind CMS agreed to support the volunteer running these clinics and manage the administration of this service. Pauline Bibby has years of experience in this field as she previously ran these clinics when they were under the umbrella of the Red Cross before Changing Faces took over their management. She will from February 2020 onwards be running monthly clinics alternating between Carlisle and Maryport. Referrals can be made by GPs and other health professionals working in practices across Cumbria to CMS.

A skin camouflage appointment offers patients the opportunity to try out skin camouflage products and see if they might be a helpful option. Skin camouflage products are creams and powders that can be used to reduce the appearance of a mark, scar or skin condition. During appointments, Pauline also takes the opportunity to talk to people about their concerns and provide practical advice.

TEAM UPDATE

Ophthalmology is a key part of the service provided by CMS. Julie Pollard is our new Health Care Assistant who started with us in October 2019 working with the Ophthalmology team based at Carlisle.

APPOINTMENTS

CMS continues to provide an excellent service to patients and this is evidenced by the number of patients we are seeing referred through to our service. The number grows year on year. Between April and December 2019 there were 15,258 appointments booked for

patients. Unfortunately though, 568 of these appointments (3.7%) were not used due to patients not attending. A reminder for patients - if you do need to cancel an appointment even at short notice, just get in touch and let us know. We operate a cancellation list so if another patient on this list is available then your appointment time can still be put to good use.

PATIENT FEEDBACK

Patients are very much at the centre of what we do and CMS is always interested to read and hear what patients have to say. Patient surveys are sent out by post or handed out on the day of a clinic on a regular basis. This feedback helps to inform what we are doing right and also what we need to do better. It helps us to provide a service which best meets the needs of patients. It's also good to hear what we are doing well and here are a few examples of what that looks like:

'All good, thank you. Good parking at clinic. Doctor understanding and patient, explained everything well to me in a way I could understand. Referral from GP quick, no waiting time.'

'Brilliant response - very reassuring consultation. Lovely team who put me at ease on the day before, during and after - loved the banter and quiet confidence, constantly checked I was okay. Couldn't ask for better care - thank you!'

'Excellent service and advice from start to finish. 1st class treatment from all concerned. A credit to the NHS. Thank you so much.'

WHAT IS ALOPECIA AREATA?

If you've seen a lot of extra hair on your pillow, brush, or shower drain, or you've noticed odd little bald spots in the mirror, you might have an autoimmune disorder called alopecia areata.

When you have an autoimmune disease, your immune system attacks your own body. With alopecia areata, it's the hair follicles that are attacked. This causes the hair to come out, often in clumps the size and shape of a quarter. The amount of hair loss is different in everyone. Some people lose it only in a few spots. Others lose a lot.

It's rare, but you can lose all the hair on your head (alopecia areata totalis) or entire body (alopecia areata universalis).

Each case of alopecia areata is different. Sometimes, hair grows back but falls out again later. In others, hair grows back for good.

If you think you do have alopecia areata, you may want to see a dermatologist.

Is There A Cure?

Alopecia areata can't be cured. But it can be treated and hair can grow back. If you have it, there are several things to try:

Corticosteroids. These are anti-inflammatory drugs that are prescribed for autoimmune diseases. They can be given as an injection into the scalp or other areas. They can also be given in pill form or rubbed on the skin as an ointment, cream, or foam. The downside is that it may take a long time to work.

Topical immunotherapy. This is used when there's a lot of hair loss, or if it happens more than once. Chemicals are applied to the scalp to produce an allergic reaction. If it works, this reaction is actually what makes the hair grow back. It also causes an itchy rash, and usually has to be repeated several times to keep the new hair growth.

Minoxidil (Rogaine). This treatment, which is put on the scalp, is already used for pattern baldness. It usually takes about 12 weeks before you see growth, and some users are disappointed in the results.

Other treatments for alopecia areata include medications that are sometimes used for other autoimmune disorders. These medicines have differing amounts of success in re-growing hair.

Other Tips

Apart from drug treatments, there are other things you can try if you have alopecia areata.

Wear wigs, hats, or scarves. They cover your hair loss and will protect your head from the sun.

Reduce stress. Personal troubles seem to trigger alopecia areata, although this has not been proven scientifically.

Alopecia areata isn't usually a serious medical condition, but it can cause a lot of anxiety and sadness. Support groups are out there to help you deal with the psychological effects of the condition.

Remember, even if you lose all your hair, it could grow back. And if it doesn't, there are all kinds of great options if want to cover your hair loss.

If you notice sudden hair loss, always check with a doctor. There can be a lot of other reasons for it besides alopecia areata.

We plan to include further helpful Information sheets in future.
What information you would find useful? What topics interest you?
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