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27th October 2009

Dear Mr Hills

Re: Services for suffers of chronic pain

Thank you for your letter dated 28th September 2009, requesting information with regard to the above services.

NHS West Kent has a weighted population of approximately 655,000 and aims to provide appropriate chronic pain services both in primary and secondary care.

Primary care treats patients who do not require intervention from a consultant. This can be through physiotherapy and/or acupuncture or through medication.

Maidstone & Tunbridge Wells Trust have a specific pain service, which currently runs mainly from Pembury Hospital. They accept referrals from GPs and the AMPS team and include 4 consultants and also pain nurses.

Management of pain at the pain clinic in Pembury is achieved by a variety of methods using the whole multi-disciplinary team. Once a referral, is received a consultation with one of the doctors is arranged. During this consultation pain will be assessed and a plan discussed for how best to treat the pain using evidence-based strategies. This is done by:

- Investigating further, if necessary, using MRI scans or X-ray;
- Reviewing medicines and perhaps making some changes;
- Discussing lifestyle changes;
- Referring to a physiotherapist if appropriate;
- Referring for a Pain Management course if appropriate;
- Offering a course of acupuncture if appropriate;
- Offering a TENs machine which is a small device that provides electrical stimulation, inhibiting pain signals to the brain; and/or

- Offering an injection (usually of local anaesthetic and steroid) to give some short to medium term relief to the appropriate area.

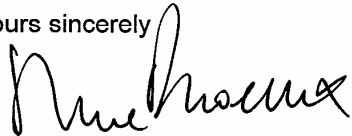
A web link which outlines further details can be found on www.mtw.nhs.uk/a-z-of-services/chronic-pain-unit.asp.

Darent Valley Hospital runs a small pain service of 1 consultant, but at present do not accept referrals from primary care, this is currently only accessible through tertiary referrals (usually from trauma and orthopaedic or rheumatology consultants). However, considerations are taking place for a further development of the service with access by GP referral.

A Medway outreach pain clinic has recently commenced at Istead Rise surgery in Gravesend. This will be held fortnightly and then weekly for new patients who have been referred to the pain clinic. In order to be accessible to patients in consideration of where they live, there are also plans for this to be held at Gravesend Community Hospital and Sittingbourne. This satellite service does not offer pain self-management and education to patients but they are referred to Medway if this is required. Medway are currently reviewing their service and therefore their pathways may change in the future.

We hope the above information is of help to you.

Yours sincerely



Steve Phoenix
Chief Executive