## 10 Primary care

## A The National Health Service

The National Health Service (NHS) is responsible for health care for everyone in the UK, although a small number choose to pay for private care. Treatment is free but there is a prescription charge for drugs and appliances, such as a cervical collar, with exemptions for some patients, such as children and the elderly.

Primary care is provided by general practitioners, or GPs, (sometimes known as family doctors), nurses, dentists, pharmacists and opticians. GPs work in practices of 1 to 20. Practices are based in a surgery and look after the health of from 1,000 to 15,000 people in their local community. They also provide health education in areas such as smoking and diet, run clinics, give vaccinations, for example for influenza, and may perform minor surgery such as removal of warts and moles. If a patient needs specialist care, the GP will make a referral – refer the patient to a consultant in secondary care.

Patients are normally seen on an appointment basis. Home visits are made when patients are housebound – unable to leave their homes – or too ill to attend surgery. Out-of-hours (OOH) treatment, from 6 pm to 8 am, is provided by the local Primary Care Trust, which organizes shifts of GPs and locum GPs to cover if someone is absent.

Note: The noun surgery has three meanings:

- the building where GPs work The practice has moved to a new surgery on the High Street.
- a time when GPs see patients Morning surgery is from 8.30 to 12.30.
- the work of surgeons The patient needs urgent surgery on a burst appendix.

## B The practice team

A typical GP practice employs receptionists. They are responsible for initial patient contact, making appointments, taking requests for repeat prescriptions, taking messages from patients and other health care providers, and for filing and scanning documents into patient records. The practice manager has responsibility for finance and sometimes for IT, supervises reception staff, hires locums, and helps prepare the practice development plan. Practice nurses run asthma, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease clinics as well as one-to-one clinics for those who wish to give up smoking.

In addition to practice staff, GPs work with a number of health professionals (see Unit 8):

- District nurses visit temporarily housebound patients, such as recently discharged hospital patients, to change dressings, such as ulcer dressings.
- Health visitors visit families to carry out check-ups on young children particularly
  under-fives to make sure they're healthy. Special attention is paid to families in need,
  such as those living in poverty. They also do baby immunizations.
- Midwives run clinics for antenatal patients.
- Physiotherapists provide hands-on treatment but also teach patients exercises they can do
  to improve their condition after an accident or operation.

## C A GP's day

Dr Stuart works in a practice in a small market town with three other family doctors. The surgery is in the centre of the town and is shared by three practices. This is a typical working morning when she is not the duty doctor, responsible for emergencies and urgent problems.

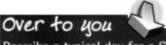
8.00 am.	arrive at the surgery
	check the OOH email printout check for urgent and non-urgent messages
8.30 am	check emails from the health board and partners
	prepare for surgery
8.30 - 10.50 AM	morning surgery (ten-minute appointments)
	6 pre-booked last week
	2 booked 48 hours ahead
	4 bookable on the day
10.50 - 10.55 am	check with <b>Reception</b> for messages
	sign prescriptions and deal with repeat prescription requests
11.00 - 11.20 am	coffee break in the conference room with colleagues
11.20 - 11.30 am	check home visit requests and divide up visits with colleagues
11.30 am - 1.00 pm	home visits

- 10.1 Complete the sentences. Look at A opposite to help you.
  - 1 Children, over-60s, and people with some chronic diseases do not have to pay in the UK.
  - 2 Patients with mobility problems may be unable to go out. They are .....
  - 3 The average GP ..... is ten minutes long.
  - 4 A ...... is someone who takes the place of a staff member who is on leave.
  - 5 Care outside working hours is known as .....
- 10.2 Make word combinations using a word or phrase from each box. One word can be used twice. Look at A and B opposite to help you.

change make perform refer run supervise take messages staff appointments home visits dressings a clinic a patient minor surgery

- 10.3 Which member of a practice team would be responsible for each of the following? Look at B opposite to help you.
  - 1 Running a clinic for pregnant women
  - 2 Teaching a patient how to strengthen his broken leg
  - 3 Letting the GP know that a patient can't come to her appointment
  - 4 Running a clinic for people who want to lose weight
  - 5 Visiting a patient who has just returned home after a hernia operation
  - 6 Carrying out check-ups on children in a poor neighbourhood
  - 7 Organizing cover for an absent doctor
- 10.4 Complete the diary for Dr Stuart's afternoon. Look at A and C opposite to help you.

1.00 - 2.00 pm	practice team meeting over sandwich lunch
2.00 - 4.00 pm	afternoon (1)
4.00 - 4.20 pm	coffee break
4.20 - 5.00 ри	check with (3)for messages. Deal with home (4)requests.
5.00 - 6.00 pm	paper work, e.g. (6) to secondary care, admin tasks, telephone calls to patients, private medical examinations
6.00 pm	phones switched to (≠)service.



Describe a typical day for a GP in your country or in the country where you work.