Estuary View Minor Injury Unit

Introduction

I have been asked to provide an article about the history of the Minor Injury Unit in Whitstable and to describe the current facility at Estuary View Medical Centre. I am pleased to do so as I have always had a personal interest in the treatment of injuries ever since working in two central London Accident & Emergency Departments, firstly at King’s College Hospital and then afterwards at The Middlesex Hospital.

The History of the Minor Injury Unit

Over many years successive Whitstable GPs and Nurses have provided a service for the injured. So far as we can tell there has been some form of Minor Injury Unit in Whitstable ever since the Whitstable and Tankerton Hospital was founded. Initially casualties attended Holden Ward and after many years a small extension, which provided a nice waiting area was funded by the Friends. GPs from Whitstable Medical Practice would travel to the hospital to attend patients, or else they were treated by the ward staff.

This system was replaced by a Minor Injury Unit at the Whitstable Health Centre some time in the 1980’s. As all the Whitstable Medical Practice General Practitioners and Practice Nurses were based there at that time it made sense for patients to be seen at Whitstable Health Centre rather than doctors having to make journeys to and from Whitstable and Tankerton Hospital, in addition to doing their normal General Practice surgeries at Whitstable Health Centre.

This facility was limited by a lack of space and no possibility of developing any diagnostic facilities, notably x-ray, at Whitstable Health Centre. Realising the limitations of this service, the WMP GPs decided to develop and improve the service by relocating it to Estuary View Medical Centre. The GPs funded an area of this building for this project. A business case was made to the PCT and a new contract was issued for WMP to provide a purpose-built MIU with improved opening hours and additional staff and facilities.

The Current Minor Injury Unit Facility

Our ambition is to provide and develop a “best in class” Level 3 Minor Injury Unit (MIU) at Estuary View Medical Centre, working with our own MIU staff and colleagues from
secondary care and elsewhere. The current facility is staffed by Whitstable Medical Practice Emergency Nurse Practitioners and Emergency Care Practitioners supported by Practice Nurses, Health Care Assistants and reception staff. WMP GPs are consulted when needed and attend the department as requested by staff. Key to the success of this unit is the availability of other affiliated services for patient users, notably x-ray, ultrasound, a Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon providing a fracture clinic and in-house physiotherapy when required. There are specific rooms for plastering and suturing. There are also electronic links that enable us to send x-ray images to local Trauma & Orthopaedic teams and also photographs of the report to the regional burns unit at East Grinstead. These links are used to obtain rapid advice about more complex injuries and they often ensure that the only onward patient journeys are those that are appropriate and necessary.

The MIU x-ray suite

The MIU is open every day of the year from 8am to 8pm and x-ray is available throughout all these hours. Anyone with an injury may use the MIU. It is not limited to Whitstable Medical Practice patients.

In addition there is an ambulance response base located at Estuary View Medical Centre which is available 24 hours a day every day of the year. This is effectively a local ambulance station at which ambulance and paramedic staff can rest and be available for rapid local response to the population of Whitstable and the wider locality. This facility has improved response times for emergency calls.

There is a Community Pharmacy at Estuary View Medical Centre which is open weekdays and Saturday morning. The Friend’s Café in the main lobby provides welcome refreshment for many of the opening hours and is much appreciated by the patients and indeed some staff! There is free parking, unlike the A&E departments at the main hospitals in East Kent and there is disabled access. The number of patients seen per month ranges between 1100 and 1766. The attached chart demonstrates this. There is no clear pattern to the numbers of attendees although weather and the number of tourists do seem to have an impact.
What conditions are seen most frequently?
There is an extremely wide range of conditions seen at the MIU. Having said that the top ten conditions are listed in order below and these account for approximately 75% of attendees.

a) Soft Tissue Inflammation
b) Laceration
c) Dislocation/fracture/joint injury
d) Sprain/ligament injury
e) Abrasions/Contusions
f) Muscle/tendon injury
g) Eye conditions
h) Head injury
i) Local infection
j) Bites/Stings

On most days several patients arrive by ambulance. These people are usually from Whitstable or Herne Bay and therefore have a shorter journey in order to receive their treatment than previously, when they would have travelled to an Accident & Emergency Department at Canterbury or Margate.

Patient Satisfaction
We are keen to assess the experience of our patients and continuously collect patient satisfaction surveys. These results are for December 2012. I hope these are self-explanatory and I think it is worth highlighting Question 5, in which all respondents said they waited less than 30 minutes before being seen. We offer patients the option to write comments and feedback in addition to filling in the specific questions. You will see these at the end of the survey. In each case, it seems that the service and the staff are appreciated.
Question 1 - ‘Other’ Answers:
- “My surgery is Estuary View”
- “Newspaper”
- “Seen it driving past” x2
- “Live locally” x5
- “I work here”
- “This is my Doctors surgery” x5
- “Been before” x3
- “Family”
- “Signpost” x2
- “Local knowledge of area”

Question 2 - ‘Other’ Answers:
- “Because it was a Sunday”
- “Good location”
- “Our local surgery”
- “We were in the area”
- “Not registered at local GP surgery”
- “Always very helpful”
- “Minor injury not requiring A&E”

Question 3 - ‘Other’ Answers:
- “Cyst on my Daughter’s shoulder”
- “Small operation needs looking at”

Question 4: Please indicate your age range:
- Under 18
- 18-30
- 31-55
- Over 55

Question 5: How long did you have to wait before being seen?
- 0-30 minutes
- 30-60 minutes
- 45-60 minutes
- More than an hour
**Question 6 - ‘Other’ Answers:**
- “Hospital” x5
- “QEQM” x5
- “Kent & Canterbury Hospital” x7
- “A&E” x7
(Some people did not state where they would attend)

**Question 7 - ‘Other’ Answers:**
- “Unable to attend my own GP as staying with my Mother in Whitstable”
- “Not registered at local surgery”

**Other comments and feedback:**
- “Friendly, efficient, professional staff and cannot praise them enough. My appointment took 40 minutes for a major laceration to my foot. I would have been lucky at QEQM to be out within 3 hours!!”
- “Very good”
- “I think this service is excellent and would recommend it to friends and family”
- “Fantastic service and treatment - good advice given and care. Receptionist very kind and efficient”
- “Very friendly service and clean”
- “Excellent service - professional and quick”
- “Great efficient professional service.”
- “Quick and easy, Nurses, Doctors and Receptionists very good. Pleasant and very helpful.”
- “Excellent service”
• “Very good and friendly service”
• “Very impressed, speedy diagnosis and treatment”
• “I have used this facility on a number of occasions and I always find the service to be excellent.”
• “Brilliant, as injury was on a baby the attention was quick and calm”
• “The receptionist was very polite and helpful”
• “We probably would not bother attending another unit. Both my wife and I rate this unit as exceptionally good.”
• “Very helpful and lovely good explanation”
• “Very quick and efficient - diagnosed my problems instantly and put my mind at rest”
• “Thankful for unit, as in severe pain, nurses wonderful and very informative. Thank you for facility”
• “Staying with Nan for the weekend.”
• “Wonderful clean place, welcoming staff.”
• “Staff- kind, friendly and thorough/professional”
• “Very satisfied with the service”
• “Very informative”
• “Thank you so much, very well served”

Involvement of the Friend’s of Whitstable Hospital and Healthcare
We have been overwhelmed by the enthusiasm and generosity of the League of Friends in developing this unit. The most important addition to the MIU is the provision of the x-ray suite. This project looked unaffordable because of the cost of building an x-ray screened suite and the cost of a full radiography staff and radiology reporting team, electronic communication to consultants for reporting and the purchase of the actual x-ray equipment. The Friends funded the actual equipment and the x-ray suite was then able to open.

In Conclusion
We feel the improved Minor Injury service at Estuary View Medical Centre is providing an improved local facility. I am sure there are times when it is busy but the nature of urgent medicine is that demand is variable and cannot always be predicted. However, we do strive to see people quickly and compassionately and the patient feedback seems to support this. As we move forward we intend to introduce more diagnostic equipment. This month we intend to offer a blood test to exclude Deep Vein Thrombosis. We also have other projects in mind in order to continue with our aim of providing high-quality care closer to home for any patient in the Whitstable area who sustains a minor injury.

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Senior GP Partner
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