

As I retire.....

Where have the last thirty years gone? I remember starting work at Alresford Surgery in 1992, when General Practice was very different, including writing in patient notes using fountain pen, doing nights on-call carrying a bag full of equipment and medications, and relying on paper maps and torches to find rural addresses. A fond memory is holding weekly branch surgeries in Preston Candover Village Hall, using the nearby phone box to enquire about home visits to be done afterwards. Hospital referrals were simple, and I had easy access to Consultant colleagues, meeting them once a week over lunch for an educational session. From antenatal to end-of-life care, and everything in between, we were involved in it all.

How things have changed. I am now part of a large multi-disciplinary team with greater specialisation, and technology has allowed me to consult by text, email, and video, even working from home when necessary. There is a "template" for everything, electronic inboxes and messaging systems, and various pathways to enable hospital referrals. Medicine is more complex and treatment possibilities almost endless. Education and meetings are done via "Teams" sitting at my computer, and lunch is noticeable only by its absence!

Yet, much has remained the same. Concern, anxiety and fear around ill health is a normal human characteristic that can affect us all. Illness continues to present in many different ways, challenging clinicians daily as we try to make a diagnosis. Some of my patients have been from the same families for three decades, though in recent years from the third or even fourth generation! Over the years we have shared many stories together, and I have had the privilege of being there through both good and difficult times. It is the continuity of these relationships that has made my role as a GP such an enjoyable one and I am grateful for this. Alongside this, I have had the privilege of working within a team who are kind, compassionate, and committed to providing the best care possible, having to respond to a continually changing NHS.

As I step back from the surgery, I wish you all well in the future.

Best wishes,

Ann Lowman