

WHY DO DOCTORS ALWAYS SEEM TO BE RUNNING LATE?

Well, we don't **Always** run late with our surgeries. Quite often patients are seen on time, and even seen early. Surgeries can however, run late, especially towards the end, which can be a big inconvenience for patients **and** doctors. This article talks about why it happens and how you may be able to help.

Arriving late: In the morning, all the doctors are in the building by 08:15 or shortly after, to be ready to take the first patient at 8:30. (By the way, the doors are open for patients at 8:15 also).

If, for example, the first patient is late (busier traffic than expected seems to be the commonest reason) and arrives say at 8:40, when the doctor is taking the 8:40 patient, then the doctor is already running **at least** 10 minutes late before they have hardly started.

Emergencies: Some events cannot be planned for: e.g. the doctor getting called out on **an emergency visit** just at the start of, or during, surgery. Such a visit can on occasion take up to an hour, but thankfully this does not happen too often; this event obviously will set things back considerably.

10 minute intervals: For surgeries, patients are booked at 10 minute intervals, but this does not necessarily mean that you, the patient has 10 minutes face-to-face with the doctor. During that 10 minutes, the doctor listens to your problem, asks you questions which will help in forming a diagnosis, examines you if needed (with a nurse if required), a prescription supplied if necessary, and advice given, perhaps with arrangements for a follow-up visit; sometimes there will be discussion about the need to be referred to see a hospital specialist. When the patient leaves the room, the doctor needs at least 2-3 minutes to type a full record of the consultation. So in any 10 minutes appointment, if the doctor is to keep to time, there are only approx 7 minutes with him or her.

Probably the **2 commonest** reasons for the doctor running late are when patients bring either a particularly **complicated problem** or when they bring **more than one problem**:

(a) Complex Problem: sometimes the problem the patient brings requires more than 10 minutes. If you think you have a difficult problem, or perhaps a new psychological symptom, e.g. depression, please ask for a 20 minute appointment

(b) One Problem - One Appointment, bringing more than 1 problem which you want the Dr to deal with will invariably cause the Dr to run late. Some patients bring in a list of problems. If the Dr deals with every problem on the list, **that patient** will be content, but it means that **subsequent patients** in the surgery will be seen late. It is easily seen therefore that it only needs 2-3 patients with either a complex problem, or with more than one problem, for the last few patients in the surgery to be seen up to an hour late. Also if the first or subsequent patients have also turned up late, this can add to the wait.

We hope you will see, that for the greater good of **all patients, the Dr's will now be asking patients who come along with more than 1 problem, to select the one they want dealt with that day,** and to come back another time with other problems.

What can YOU do to help?

- **Book one** 10 minute appointment for one problem, a 20 minute one if the problem is complicated, or if you have 2 problems.
- **Turn up on time** (if there is a queue at reception, why not try the computerised check in system, on the wall to the right of the reception desk)
- **Before you see the Dr,** think about your symptoms and what you will tell him/her, e.g. how long have you had them, how severe is it, does it come and go, what makes it worse or better
- **If the Dr (or nurse) is running late,** please be patient and understanding; they are trying to keep to time.....they may have been called out to a seriously ill patient.