

What I have learnt from Great Bedwyn

By

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When invited by Dr Ballard to write a short article for the parishes of Great Bedwyn and surrounding villages I spent some time reflecting on the many interesting cases I have been faced with during my final year of training. I have had an amazing ten months and the spectrum of the conditions I have seen and managed has been vast. I have learnt a considerable amount of medicine but also enjoyed every aspect of my first year working as a GP.

Great Bedwyn and the surrounding communities have taught me about more than the medical conditions I have been confronted with. Placing a diagnosis into the context of a persons' life provides a perspective that urban general practice and hospital medicine struggles to access but is something that is brought to the fore by the closeness of this rural community. Taking an interest in a persons' response to illness and not just the illness itself is one part of the immeasurable value of understanding your patients as people. People are all different, they respond to a change in health in different ways and they need an individual personalised plan. I will never fail to be moved, surprised and amazed by the strength and courage of the human spirit in coping with adversity. It is refreshing to find a neighbourhood with such a strong sense of community spirit reflected in the care and support members of the community have shown to their friends and neighbours in times of need.

Rural general practice comes with its own set of challenges with many people living a considerable distance from district hospitals and services. This relative inaccessibility of emergency care has provided several opportunities to manage acute medical conditions that may have otherwise been dealt with by an A&E department. I have been impressed on many occasions by the resourcefulness of staff and patients who without a second thought have been willing to go that extra mile, often finding innovative ways to help those around them. One skill that I shall continue to develop is to know what to do when you don't know what to do!

Being part of this community has highlighted the importance of a local doctor who knows patients and their families, with an awareness of the social and psychological factors enveloping the issues of health. GPs are the only doctors that remain with their patients through sickness and health, they have a unique insight into a persons life and with that an ability to potentially detect more subtle aspects of illness and wellbeing. Visiting people at home and assessing them in the reality of their day to day environment has been a great privilege. I have been made to feel so welcome by people who are often at their most vulnerable and unwell, yet a further reflection of the trust and respect between the doctors and this community.

I have made many friends during my time in Great Bedwyn. I have learnt skills far wider than those taught at medical school and enjoyed my time at the Old School Surgery immensely. It has been a fabulous platform for me at this stage of my career and I feel privileged to have had such a great introduction to the world of general practice. Thank you for the warm welcome and I wish you all well.

An Apple a Day!