



# **Who is who in the practice team and what do they do?**

Roving Practice Managers  
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## Who is who at the surgery?

Modern surgeries can be extremely big, with dozens of staff as well as the doctors, and at first sight, they can seem confusing places until you work out what everyone does. However, they are all run in much the same way and the staff are there to help patients.

### Administrative Team

#### Reception staff

Receptionists are the 'front of house' staff in any surgery. They must juggle the demands of patients with the instructions from doctors.

Their main role is to make sure patients get the help the patients need by booking appointments with the right people.

Receptionists can sometimes advise a patient as to whether they require the attention of a nurse rather than a GP.

Receptionists often are involved in other administrative tasks such as taking payments for insurance reports, loaning out equipment, reviewing the post to ensure that it is seen by the right person and downloading the electronic post.

All practice staff are bound by strict codes of confidentiality, so any personal medical information patients pass on to them will not be abused.

In most practices, receptionists also have other administrative roles such as ensuring hospital letters, patient notes and test results from the hospital are filed correctly. They will also complete tasks for the practice such as convey messages to patients or call patients for appointments or vaccinations etc. They also deduct patients from the system who have left the surgery or passed away.

They are often extremely knowledgeable about local health services as well as what is available to patients at the practice.

Summarising the patient notes for the clinical system is sometimes done by the reception team or by a dedicated note summariser.

There is sometimes a Reception Manager or Assistant Practice Manager between the Reception team and the Practice Manager. They may complete the clinical and staff rotas. Line Manage the administration and reception team etc.

## Practice Manager

The practice manager is responsible for making sure the surgery runs as smoothly as possible. This crucial position involves:

- Organising the practice staff
- Paying the practice's bills
- Buying supplies
- Ensuring the practice is correctly paid for the work it does.
- Maintaining the building
- Health and safety
- Managing complaints and sharing compliments
- Information Governance
- Ensuring compliance
- Arranging interaction with stakeholders e.g. the CCG or PCN.
- Patient complaints

If the reception staff are unable to answer a patient query, the Senior receptionist, Assistant Practice Manager or Practice Manager is often asked to help.

For most people, though, the main reason they need to approach a Practice Manager directly is to register a complaint.

## Data input/Information Technology Clerk

Occasionally practices have a data input clerk to process patients' paperwork and records now these are now stored electronically.

Although they occasionally work on reception, in general they have little contact with patients.

## Medical Secretaries

Ensure that letters and referrals are completed correctly for the patients. They sometimes also arrange prescriptions for the GPs to check or this could be completed by a prescription clerk.

## Medical staff

### GPs

GPs diagnose illness, prescribe medicines and refer patients for tests and to specialists if their problem can't be dealt with in the surgery. Some GPs are salaried or in training e.g. F2 or Registrars and some run the practice and are called GP Partners.

Remember, GPs can't be expert in every field of medicine.

Most surgeries have doctors with particular areas of expertise, such as diabetes or rheumatology, so ask what these are.

Each practice will also have a GP who is the senior partner, but this refers to seniority in the practice rather than a field of expertise as such.



### Practice Nurses

Most surgeries now have more than one practice nurse, who deal with a range of activities, including:

- performing smear tests
- phone consultations
- answering queries on blood tests or smear results
- changing surgical dressings
- blood pressure checks
- immunisations and travel jabs
- giving family planning advice

Practice nurses often run their own clinics and specialise in conditions such as asthma, high blood pressure or diabetes. These are often run in conjunction with a doctor who they can ask for advice if necessary. Nurses have varied experience and skills so may see different types of patients.

Nurse practitioners may be able to prescribe medication where appropriate.

### Healthcare Assistants

Support the nursing team and can complete many tasks such as:

- sterilise equipment
- Complete health checks
- Restock consulting rooms
- Process lab samples
- Take blood samples
- Do health promotion or health education work

As well as nurses, HCAs work with doctors, midwives and other healthcare professionals. They have a lot of contact with patients.

## Other Healthcare Professionals

Other healthcare professionals linked to a surgery may not be housed in the same building as the GP, but they are essential to the smooth delivery of care.

### Chiropodists

Chiropodists are lower limb specialists who can diagnose and treat foot problems. They can also give patient advice on how to prevent problems and take care of patients' feet.

Patients should seek help from a chiropodist if they have a problem such as:

- bunions
- heel pain
- Corns
- Verrucae
- in-growing toenails
- athlete's foot.



Older people with diabetes and those with bone deformities caused by arthritis are likely to need help from a chiropodist.

### Dieticians

Dieticians advise on suitable diets and aspects of nutrition to help with health problems such as diabetes. They can also help if patients need to lose weight.

Many are based in the local hospital, although some are based in the surgery.

### District nurses

District nurses often pay visits to people who need help with dressings, medication, blood glucose checks and refilling of equipment such as syringe drivers.

### Midwives

Keeping pregnant women well cared for during their pregnancy.

### Health visitors

Health visitors carry out a similar role to the practice nurse but tend to see people in their own homes more often.

They are involved in things like child health clinics, immunisations, and the welfare of new mothers.

## Physiotherapists

Some practices have Physiotherapists who can assist patients with complaints such as back pain.

## Pharmacists

Pharmacists are professionals who advise on medicines.

They can help decide the best treatment plan for a person with a particular health problem if that person also takes medication for other conditions.

Pharmacists can also give advice about the best times to take any medication patients have been prescribed and answer patient questions about the treatment. They can also arrange to switch drugs and monitor usage.

Arrangements for pharmacist input vary, and they are not always considered part of the primary care team.

Some practices have a pharmacy and they are called a Dispensing practice if this is the case. They tend to serve more rural communities. Some have a separately run pharmacy in the surgery building.

Each surgery is different and some have several sites or even a head office or are part of a federated group or alliance.

You will find out more about this and the lines of reporting within your practice.

If in doubt, ask your Practice Manager.

