

Is there a doctor in the house?

Perhaps the most frustrating aspect of lockdown has been how it's been near impossible to have a face-to-face consultation with a GP.



They've certainly been working all-out during pandemic - but it's obvious the "telephone consultation only" system hasn't been great for older patients and parents of young children.

We all know how often in the past we've gone to the Doctor with what seems to a relatively plain ailment. Having seen you, they've spotted something quite different - and potentially more serious.

It's also the case that unless a parent or carer is medically-trained, it's difficult for them to fully explain their child or elderly parent's symptoms adequately.

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RELAX ... but IT'S NOT OVER YET

It's fairly-well accepted that at least in the developed World, the COVID Pandemic has been if not stopped - it's been slowed in its tracks. It may be some time yet before we can say it's over, mainly because of the anti-vaccine brigade who refuse to accept that they should be inoculated, if not for their own good, but for the good of their families wider community.

Like other global diseases and viruses e.g. SARS, Malaria, Polio, Smallpox and TB - the World Health Organisation must take urgent developed countries to work together to support the poorer nations to eradicate the COVID virus.

What can we look forward to?

Annual Booster Jags - we've still got the ongoing Omicron variant to concern us, but the signs suggest that it is less severe and is 'controllable' with increasingly effective booster jags.

We'll just have to come to terms with it ... we'll almost certainly be queuing up for our Covid boosters along with our Flu jags for a few years to come.

Face Masks won't be 'compulsory' and it will be up to individuals to wear them or not ... but it may be open for shops or businesses to continue to ask for them to be worn on their premises.

Masks still have to be worn in Doctors' and Dentists' surgeries

Latest news reports say that NHS Scotland has detected twenty-six cases of a new COVID variation, "BA.2", in Scotland in the last few days. It may not as harmful as OMNICRON, but seemingly it's highly virulent and more transmissible.

It's early days yet but there's every chance the viral control labs will very quickly be able to 'tweak' existing vaccines to tackle this new threat before it gets a hold.

Yes! YOU CAN RELAX ...

you can enjoy a night out for a meal in a restaurant or a drink with friends in a pub ... but ... stay focussed ...

This new development emphasises the Government advice to continue to **avoid mixing in large crowds** and to continue using face masks in enclosed public spaces'.

This new variant shows that we have to stay on guard. **Don't throw all away all the good work we've done so far!**

The NHS MUST be a PRIORITY

The most urgent task facing the Scottish and UK Governments in the wake of COVID is to tackle the huge backlog Health issues that built up in the last two years.

Waiting list targets

for non-urgent Cardiac surgery, hip & knee replacement and cataract replacement - other 'routine' non-COVID health issues have been scrapped due to the high COVID demands.

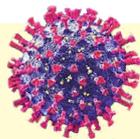
Services across the NHS range - Ophthalmology, Audiology and Mental Health - all need to be 'rebooted' to catch up.

Staffing

NHS staff across the board are exhausted and there's a looming staffing Health issue. Two years working at crisis levels has taken its toll.

(continued on P2)

OMNICRON - What should we do now?



The signs are that we're definitely through the worst of it. We can relax and look to return to near normality of it but the Virus hasn't gone away so we shouldn't drop our guard completely

- **Make sure you're double-vaccinated - if you haven't already done it make and get your booster Injection NOW!**
- **Do Lateral Flow Tests before you go out to mix with others**
- **Be careful** when you're in crowded places i.e. discos, pubs, restaurants and sports stadiums.
- **Continue to wear a face mask** if you are comfortable with it to when near other people - for example in shops
- **Keep your house well-ventilated** - Open the windows in your house at least for a short spell each day.

You may be reluctant - but please don't throw it all away now, Don't spoil all you good work!

Will we have 'REAL' Conferences and meetings in 2022?

During lockdown, we were stopped from meeting together. Then someone came up with the idea of "virtual" Conferences or 'Zoom' meetings. That's okay if you have a computer and the technical 'savvy' to handle 'tele-conferencing'. I've got the computer - I can probably handle it better than most - and I've probably been to more meetings than most others over the years but I couldn't grasp the concept of conversing with a screenful of wee faces. I suspect I like many senior colleagues - especially senior colleagues - have simply opted out. If I'm having a discussion I prefer to "see the whites of their eyes".

UNISON hasn't had a National Delegate Conference for 3 years or a National Retired Members Conference since 2018. Conferences agree policies through broad debate. Policies are no longer decided in open debate. You don't get that "virtually". "Virtual" also misses the invaluable interaction that takes place between delegates from the different Regions and Branches.

It's easier and cheaper to organise a virtual Conference so some folk may be tempted to ditch the real ones.



Scottish Branch Delegates at the 2018 National Retired Members Conference. Try getting that lot on your wee computer screen!

Which? Scam warnings

The Consumer organisation WHICH? has issued warnings about a number of scams - some old and many new - that have been doing the rounds over the Festive period.

Post Office Website - Beware of a new fake text scam from the PO saying a parcel delivery has failed and ask recipients to click the link to 'book a new date' or 'reschedule a delivery' via 2 sites that have nothing to do with the Post Office.

Fake Santander texts - Again, keep an eye out for this one which claims to be from Santander saying new direct debits have been set up. It attempts to trick people into clicking links loaded with spyware which can steal personal details.

For more information on both go to the Which? website - <https://campaigns.which.co.uk/scams/>

Fake Police Officers - Local Police in a number of Regions in Scotland have warned about "Police Impersonators" who cheated victims out of over £300,000 between Oct 2021 and Jan 2022. Victims were contacted by phone by someone claiming to be from their Bank saying their account had been compromised and telling them to transfer funds to be collected by a Police Officer.

Police Scotland issued a warning, saying all Officers should provide proper identification when carrying out legitimate business

Tell WHICH? about new scams with their sharer tool

Let WHICH? know of phishing emails, fake texts, cold calls and other types of fraud. Share this information with your friends, family and neighbours - anyone who may find it helpful. You can sign up to receive this directly to your inbox.

Is there a doctor in the house? (cont.from P1)

Many elderly patients live alone and may find it difficult to connect with the Surgery. Many don't have an iPad or Smart phone with a camera that lets do them do a video call so they are simply reliant on a telephone conversation.



It's difficult to hold a conversation with someone in the early stages of dementia. It's so much more difficult on the telephone.

There are encouraging signs that some Doctors' Practices are looking for ways to increase face-to-face consultations. The BMA Scotland has acknowledged the mental health issues for elderly patients arising from lack of personal contact during lockdown.

If you or someone you are Carer for feels 'uncomfortable' with a telephone consultation, you should insist on an appointment for a face-to-face meeting with your GP.

If you find Doctors' appointments are difficult - have you tried to get a dental appointment recently? You've got a greater chance of having an audience with the Pope!

They've been telling us for years that we should have regular dental checks. I was at my dentist a few days ago (it's a long story) and heard the receptionist telling a caller that **the first date she could offer for a checkup was 4th November 2022.**

I have to wonder would it be different for an NHS patient and one who has an expensive 'Private Plan'?

Will the last one to leave please switch off the light?

Do you remember parents yelling at you to ... "Switch off that light"? I do and my dad's old nagging is making more sense today

It's not just about lights - TVs, radios and other electrical appliances all cost you - even on 'stand-by'. If it's not being used, switch it off! It's expense you probably cannot afford!

It's not just Energy - it's about waste! Costs for food, travel and other essentials are mounting faster than our resources. Pensioners and low-income families are the hardest hit.

And it's not just Money either - You can maybe afford it, but stop wasting resources and producing harmful emissions if we are going to counter Global Warming

The WASPI Campaign calls on the government to agree fair and fast compensation for all women affected by the lack of notice regarding their state pension age increases (1995 and 2011 Pensions Acts) to reflect their financial losses, the sustained damage to their mental health and well-being, and the additional impacts.

WASPI are not asking for full restitution



#fairandfastcompensation



RETIRED MEMBERS COMMITTEE



Matters concerning Retired Members in Scotland e.g. campaigns - policies - education etc are overseen by the Scottish Retired Members Committee.

Contact the Scottish Secretary Barbara Fulton or your local Branch Retired Members Secretary if you need advice or want to raise any general matters services.

Chair Tom Lithgow (Lothian)
Secretary Barbara Fulton (South Lanarkshire)
Contact Barbara at babsunison@yahoo.co.uk

NHS MUST have PRIORITY (cont from P1)

Many nurses are reported to be considering leaving the Service. Not just nurses, but Ambulance Drivers, Catering staff, Cleaners and Auxiliaries

There's no doubt the crisis kicked off when many immigrant EU Citizens returned home in the wake of the disastrous BREXIT vote, particularly so in the Social Care sector.

The NHS has been regarded as the "Gem in the UK's Crown". It's now looking a bit tarnished and needs some TLC to return it to its former glory.

If we are going to save the NHS, there has to be an urgent recruitment and training programme. It won't be quick and it won't be cheap. If we are going to attract new staff - at all levels - we have to pay decent wages and give good working conditions.

RETIRED MEMBERS NEWS

RM News is a communication briefing for Retired Members in Dumfries and Galloway but we are happy to send copies to individuals and Branches all over the country! Each issue has 2 pages - but if I've enough material I can do another later in the month. That keeps it more relevant. With 4 pages, it tends to be out-of-date before I get it out - especially so during the pandemic when things were changing daily. It also depends on how much time I have

Can you write something for us?

Contributions are always welcome. It's not too difficult! You don't need to be a 'polished writer'. Put your thoughts on paper and send them in. We'll clean them up if necessary!

We're always happy suggestions for interests or topics for us to follow up!

It doesn't have to be long! Short is simple! Limit your contribution to about 250 words. If it is a burning issue, we can always do a follow-up article in the next issue!

Deadlines - There's no fixed deadlines, but I try to get it out early in each month. If you send something, get it to me in the last week of the month - for inclusion in the next issue.

Photographs are great if they're of reasonable standard. Mobile phone cameras are usually okay if they are closeups.

If you have UNISON colleagues or friends who want copies of the Retired Members newsletter, tell them to e-mail Liam Chalmers (e-mail address below).

