

It's not our job



I had a conversation the other day that led me, emphatically, to realise why the 'powers that be' don't understand what actually happens in general practice.

Like most practices, we've been inundated with patients not being able to get a COVID Passport. One patient in particular was having terrible problems not being able to get her passport; I'd dealt with her a couple of times and had tried to signpost her to the correct agencies. The day before her business trip, her COVID Passport still wasn't sorted and in desperation she asked to

speak to me again.

My hands were completely tied, of course, because general practice, as we all know, don't issue COVID Passports. The patient was crying on the phone, unsure where to turn next. "Leave it with me," I said. I made a few calls, sent a few emails and eventually got to speak to someone who dealt with the passport's quality issues.

I explained the predicament our patient was in. I was quite astounded to be told, "Why are you getting involved? It's not your job." Of course, I knew this already! He said, "You should just give them the helpline, and that's it."

*Don't you think I've ***** done that already, ten days ago?* I said in my head.

"Yes, I did that ten days ago," I said. "However, the patient still hasn't managed to get her passport and has been passed around many people and now has come back to her GP practice. That's what patients normally do," I said. "They normally come back to general practice. If and when they can't get answers elsewhere, they come back to their practice for all sorts of things that aren't '**our job**' and we then do whatever we can to help them. That's what we do."

"You shouldn't," he said. "It's not your job."

It got me thinking about what general practice would look like if we did really just '**do our job**'.

When the district nurse hasn't turned up and the patient rings to tell us, we could just say, "Sorry, it's not our job."

When the patient rings up because they can't remember their NHS number, we could just say, "Sorry, it's not our job."

When the patient runs in to say a bird is trapped in a drain in the carpark and they're not sure what to do, we could just say, "Sorry, it's not our job."

When the patient is too scared to come into the surgery and asks to be seen in their car, we could just say, "Sorry, it's not our job."

When a patient has no money and needs a letter from their GP to help them get a home, we could just say, "Sorry, it's not our job."

When a patient rings for a home visit and we all know it's because she's lonely, we could just say, "Sorry, it's not our job."

When patients ring to say they haven't been seen in secondary care and they're worried, we could just say, "Sorry, it's not our job."

When patients come back in to say they've lost their glasses, we could just say, "Sorry, it's not our job."

When someone comes in to say their parent with dementia went for a walk and hasn't returned, we could just say, "Sorry, it's not our job."

When someone is too frightened to ring for an ambulance and asks us to do it for them, we could just say, "Sorry, it's not our job."

When a patient calls 119 with a Covid vaccination query that they are unable to deal with, they ask the patient to contact their GP, we could just say, "Sorry, it's not our job."

And so on.

In general practice, none of us just do '**our job**'. We're the hub of the community. We provide general medical services and more. Some people may say we shouldn't. I, for one, wouldn't work in a practice where we simply '**did our job**'. We're human beings trying to help other human beings. We don't have magic wands or bottomless resources; however, we do have empathy and understanding. We always strive to help where able.

General practice isn't run on a set of rigid rules; it's run on humanity and compassion.

It's our job but equally patients have to help us to help them.