



## GPs are still available: five minutes with . . . Mohammed Abbas Khaki

The London based GP says patients should not be afraid to seek help when they need it

Abi Rimmer

The BMJ

“My wife Sayyada Mawji and I are both GPs and we’ve launched a campaign called #stillherestillcare to explain to patients that healthcare professionals are still here to support them.

“If patients have tried self-care and they’re still unwell or they still have a sense that something isn’t right we want them to get in touch. We’re saying speak to your GP or, if you think it’s something serious, call 111 or 999 or go to hospital.

“One of our worries is the repercussions of delayed attendances. They can result in emergencies, life threatening conditions, and patients getting very unwell.

“Over the past few weeks we’ve found that more and more patients are delaying attending and getting in touch. They’ve given several different reasons why that’s happening.

“I understand why—there’s a real anxiety among many patients around contracting coronavirus—they’re worried that they could pick it up by going to hospital.

“There’s also a group of patients who don’t want to be a burden on the NHS and who try to manage as best they can at home. Quite a few times, elderly patients have said to me, ‘I’m actually

feeling very short of breath, but I’ll be fine.’ When you look into it you realise they are extremely unwell and need to be in hospital.

“Some people also don’t know that services are running. Patients don’t know that while junior doctors in some specialties may now be working in other areas, a lot of the senior doctors are covering their services to make sure there is still provision. So these services are still available.

“There are also groups of patients, such as those who are immunosuppressed or those with chronic health conditions, who don’t want to go anywhere near a hospital. However, while we may not have PPE or testing, we have got doctors who understand how to make the system safe.

“Hospitals and GP practices have completely changed the way they work. In general practice we have telephone and video consultations, which means that patients won’t be coming into a surgery where there are lots of other patients. If we need to see you, we will assess you in safe zones.

“It’s really important that if patients are worried about their health they get in touch, because it’s safe to do so.”