

## **Primary Care Elective Prize: Healthcare in Jersey, Channel Islands**

I conducted my elective at St Martin surgery and at Jersey General Hospital (JGH) in the Emergency Department (ED). As a self-governing island, Jersey is external to the NHS. Hospital-based services are free of charge for Jersey residents, financed by the Health Insurance fund and social security payments. GP surgeries operate privately and the average price of a consultation is £37. There are concerns about equal access to primary healthcare. Prior to 2008, the Health Insurance Exemption (HIE) scheme delivered means-tested free GP consultations. When Income Support replaced HIE, GP services were no longer free at the point of use and appointments for low-income households significantly diminished. In 2020, GP consultation fees were reduced to £12 for households receiving income support. Primary care costs may be a greater burden for individuals from poorer socioeconomic backgrounds who are more likely to develop a chronic illness earlier in life. Provision of reduced fee consultations is crucial to protect access to primary care. Out-of-hours (OOH) primary care is provided through Jersey Doctors on Call (JDOC) – a cooperative between GP surgeries established in 2006. Based at JGH, OOH care is available at a highly accessible location.

I conducted a survey to collect patient views on general practice in Jersey. Patients selected the following aspects that work well: quality of care (88%), availability of appointments (85%), location of services (73%), and continuity of care (73%). Conversely, 22% of patients surveyed felt that value for money could be improved. Private medical insurance was held by 27% of respondents.

There are challenges to delivering tertiary care on-island, where demand would not sustain the service. Patients receiving non-urgent specialist care are transferred to UK hospitals on commercial flights paid for by States of Jersey. Urgent transfers are provided by Jersey Emergency Transfer Service (JETS). For example, 89 patients requiring PCI were transferred in 2016. This facilitates high quality specialist care for Jersey patients at existing tertiary centres in the UK.

I reflected on the rewarding nature of practising within a smaller surgery which facilitates continuity of care between families as well as individuals. Ensuring equal access to primary care is an ongoing concern. I was struck by the important role Jersey GPs have in influencing healthcare policy by advocating for their patients.

*By Isobel Taylor*

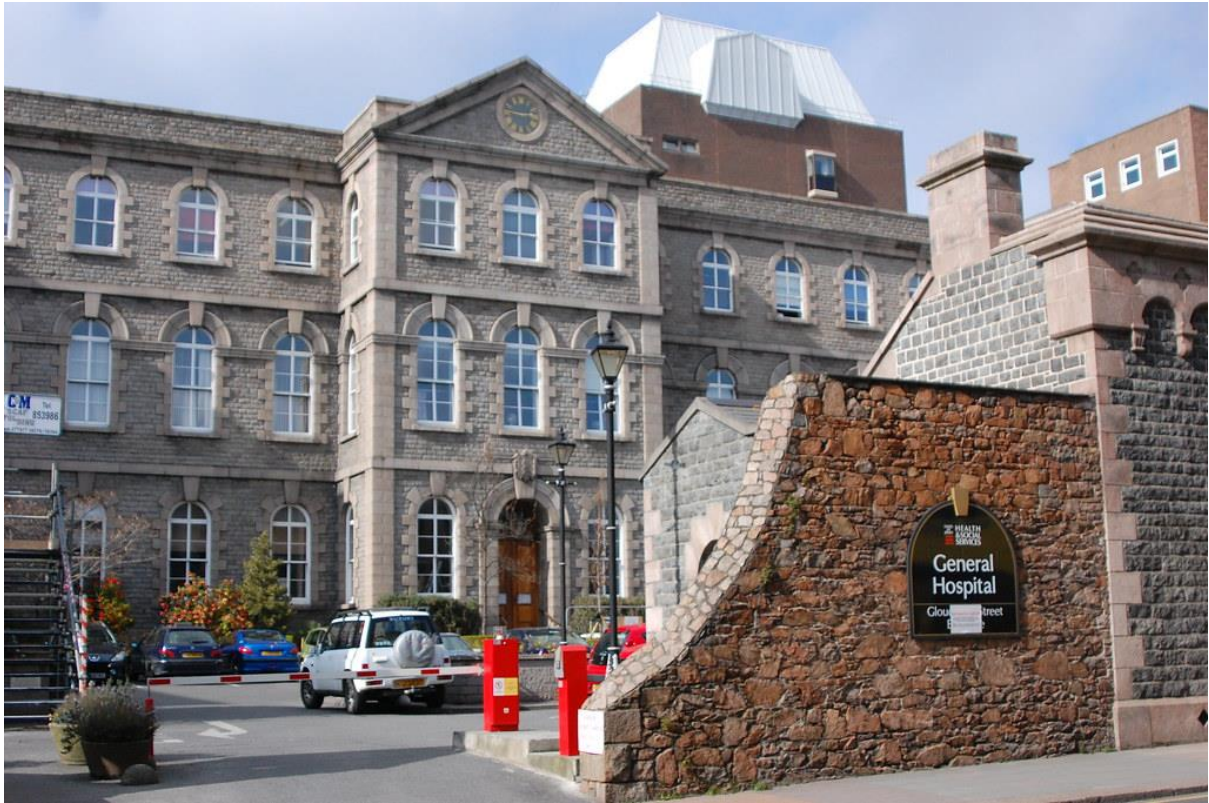


Image: Jersey General Hospital by Ryan Morrison.

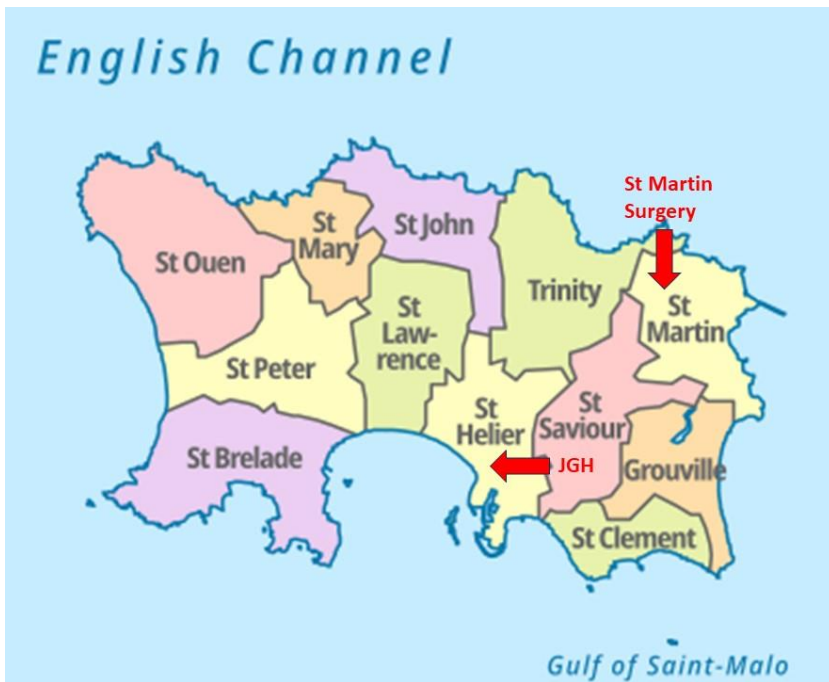


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