**Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Care – Understanding the Health System**

***What is the difference between Primary, Secondary and Tertiary care?***

***Primary Care:***

*Health services directly in touch with the community. These include general practitioners (GPs), Nurse Practitioners, community nurses, physiotherapists, dentists, pharmacists, Health Improvement Practitioners (HIPs) and Health Coaches (HCs).*

*Primary healthcare providers cover a wide range of services, and you should contact them for almost all your health needs.*

***Secondary Care:***

*Services provided by medical specialists such as cardiologists, radiologists, urologists, and psychiatrists.*

*If you need secondary healthcare services, your primary healthcare provider will refer you to a specialist.*

***Tertiary Care:***

*Specialist services for inpatients (patients who stay in a hospital). These include treatments for serious illnesses and injuries, cancer management, and complex surgeries such as heart or brain surgery.*

***A typical patient journey***

*Making an appointment:*

*Phone your primary care practice and ask for an appointment. Tell the receptionist what you want to see a healthcare professional about. Appointments are usually 15 minutes, but you can ask for a longer appointment, which may cost more.*

*If you need urgent attention your health care team will work to get you the care you need a soon as possible.*

*Visiting your primary care practice:*

*Turn up on time to your appointment. Your health care team may be running late, so allow for extra time at the end of your appointment.*

*Your health care team will talk to you about your symptoms or condition and may physically examine you with your permission. He or she will give advice on what you should do next.*

*They may prescribe you medication or other treatments, and can carry out some minor procedures in clinic, including dressing wounds and giving vaccinations.*