

# The Elms Family Medical Centre

## Quarterly Newsletter

*Keeping you in touch with developments at our Medical Centre*

[www.theelms.com.au](http://www.theelms.com.au)

### Autumn 2024

The Elms now has access to the Covid-19 immunisation for our patients. We offer the latest version of the adult Moderna booster. The current Government recommendation is that people over the age of 75 years should have a booster six months after their previous immunisation, or six months after their last confirmed infection. It should also be considered for people aged between 18 to 74 years who have health risk factors. We are allocated a limited supply of the vaccine by the health department each month. Interested patients should contact reception to reserve an injection, which can be administered by our clinic nurses.

### Doctor news

We recently farewelled GP registrar, Dr Emily Thrower, who completed her six-month outer metropolitan rotation with us. Emily's next placement will include undertaking a PhD at Melbourne University. In her place, we welcome our next group of GP registrars, Dr Kithmini Cooray, Dr Rahul Panchal and Dr Ron Leizerovitz. All have previously experienced working in general practice as well as various hospital-based medical and surgical postings. We would like to congratulate our other GP registrar, Dr Laura Machan, who has successfully passed all the examination requirements for her specialist general practice qualification. Laura will be away for 12 months of maternity leave starting early April. We are very pleased that Laura intends to return to The Elms after her leave.

### Medical student news

The Elms is affiliated with the Rural Community Clinical School of the Deakin University School of Medicine and has been hosting third-year medical students since 2011. Each placement is for 12 months and during this time the student receives teaching from our doctors and nurses, plus experience through direct patient interaction and parallel consulting. Our medical student in 2024 is Elisha Johns. Prior to commencing his postgraduate medical studies, Elisha completed a Bachelor of Biomedical Science degree at Deakin University. Originally from Mildura, he is particularly keen to experience the long-term patient care associated with community general practice. Outside of study, Elisha enjoys basketball, badminton and marathon running. We thank our patients for being involved in Elisha's training experience.

### Receptionist news

Candice, who had been with us for almost a year, unfortunately had to resign for personal reasons. We are sad to see her leave as even in the short time she was with us, she proved to be a great receptionist and a valuable member of our team. We wish Candice all the best for the future as we begin the search for a new receptionist to join our team.

### Public holidays clinic hours

The Elms is closed on Sundays and public holidays, plus any day in lieu if the public holiday falls on a weekend. For urgent after-hours care, please contact the Bacchus Marsh Hospital on (03) 5367-2000. Additional after-hours advice is available through the GP Helpline on 1800-022-222, Nurse-On-Call on 1300-606-024, or the Victorian Virtual Emergency Department at [www.vved.org.au](http://www.vved.org.au). Patients with medical emergencies should call 000.

## **75+ health checks**

Patients aged 75 years and older are eligible for a Medicare-funded bulk-billed health check every 12 months. This involves seeing our clinic nurse for 30 to 45 minutes followed by the doctor. Topics covered include home safety, mobility, self-care, advance care directives, medication review, outstanding tasks and reminders, and physical and mental checks. Even if a patient sees their doctor frequently, the 75+ health check is an opportunity to explore areas that may not be routinely covered during consultations focussing on other presenting issues. Please speak with your doctor or reception for further details.

## **Changed frequency for prostate blood test**

Medicare recently changed how often the prostate specific antigen (PSA) blood test may be performed for screening purposes, from 12 monthly to 2 yearly. Prostate tests done more frequently may not be covered by Medicare, resulting in an out-of-pocket cost to the patient. Exceptions may apply, such as monitoring of abnormal levels or if the patient has an increased risk for prostate cancer. Patients may also choose to pay privately if they opt to have their PSA checked more often. Please discuss with your doctor if you have any concerns.

## **High blood pressure and sodium intake**

Elevated blood pressure (hypertension) is associated with high sodium intake. Sodium is found in common table salt, as sodium chloride. Recent Australian research has found that the rates of high blood pressure and cardiovascular disease may be reduced by substituting some of the sodium with potassium. This can be achieved by replacing standard table salt with potassium-enriched salt. Marketed as Lite Salt, it contains half the amount of sodium as regular salt but looks and tastes the same. However, this may not be for everyone, such as patients with severe kidney impairment or those taking certain medications. Please speak with your doctor to discuss whether Lite Salt is appropriate for you.

## **Shopping centre development**

Patients may be aware that The Village Shopping Centre has had its plans to expand retail space at the expense of reduced car parks upheld by VCAT despite objections from Council and locals. The decision by VCAT is final and binding. A consequence of this expansion is that all patient parking at the front of The Elms will be lost, and access to the clinic entrance will be reduced to foot traffic only. This means patients will not be able to be dropped off or picked up in front of the clinic by car or taxi. There is no indication when construction will begin but once it does, there will be major disruptions due to road closures, noise, and dust. We will provide updates regarding service changes through Facebook and the clinic website.

## **Equality versus equity**

An important social concept is the difference between equality and equity. Equality and equity are only interchangeable if everyone starts at the same point. For example, giving everyone the same ladder to reach a ledge is fine if everyone is the same height. However, a shorter person would need a taller ladder to reach the same ledge. Giving the shorter person the same ladder is equal but not equitable. When it comes to health services, equality means having the same access to services and treatments, whereas equity means having the same health outcomes.

Superficially, equality seems like a fair and reasonable end point. However, there are many people in our society who are disadvantaged, meaning that they need that taller ladder just to reach the same level. It is not uncommon to hear comments that special programs and funding for specific groups are examples of favouritism and unfairness. Using the above example, those comments can be interpreted as being critical of giving the short person a taller ladder because it was unfair for the tall person.

**“Complete ongoing care for you and your family”**

