

The Elms Family Medical Centre

Quarterly Newsletter

Keeping you in touch with developments at our Medical Centre

www.theelms.com.au



Spring 2016

Despite the importance of traditional advertising, we find that the majority of our new patients hear about The Elms through positive word of mouth from family and friends. This also extends to electronic “word of mouth” via social media such as Facebook. All our doctors and staff make ongoing efforts to ensure that we provide a genuine quality medical service that cares for patients and their families over the long term. Having a continuous relationship between patient and clinic not only improves health outcomes but also means that help can be sought from someone you know and who knows you. Building this trust takes time, and we value and appreciate the support of our patients over the years to develop these important health relationships.

Doctor news

We recently fare-welled two of our doctors and welcomed back a familiar face. Dr Carolyn Sebastian completed her specialist general practice qualification whilst with us at The Elms and wanted to take time off to travel and catch up with family. Dr Amanda Gibbons, having finished her basic and advanced general practice rotations with us, headed off to Ararat for twelve months of outer rural placement. We wish both Carolyn and Amanda ongoing success in the next stage of their careers. Dr Ayesha Munir has returned after twelve months away, with six months of maternity leave followed by six months of outer rural general practice placement in Kerang. Ayesha first commenced at The Elms in August 2014 and we are very pleased to see her back to continue her specialist general practice training with us.

Our core doctors, Drs Rob Hosking, Woody Wu, Anmar Naoum, Sue Lee, Amit Kumar, Ummu Rauf and Leon Toh, remain unchanged.

Community involvement

In addition to providing medical care at the clinic, our doctors are also involved in the wellbeing of the community in other ways. The Elms has an ongoing relationship with the Bacchus Marsh Hospital with our doctors providing treatment for patients of The Elms in the medical-surgical ward, and also working out-of-hours at the hospital's Urgent Care Centre. The clinic receives requests to speak at community groups and we are very happy to volunteer our time for such causes. Just recently, Drs Woody Wu and Leon Toh were invited to talk about men's health issues at the Bacchus Marsh Men's Shed. The Elms also supports local events and organisations through sponsorship, such as the David Calleja Memorial Car Show, the Performing Arts Headquarters' yearly musical production, and the annual Rotary Art Show. This year, we have also been a player sponsor for Samuel Rousch of the Bacchus Marsh Football and Netball Club.

Visiting general surgeons

Mr Binh Nguyen, specialist general surgeon, has been consulting at The Elms since 2012. From late September this year, he will be changing his fortnightly consulting from Monday morning to Tuesday afternoon, in line with a rescheduling of his operating sessions at Bacchus Marsh Hospital.

Ms Ruth Bollard, specialist breast and general surgeon, continues consulting monthly at The Elms on Monday afternoon.

Updating patient details

Without a doubt, the world is a rapidly changing place. A consequence is that people move more frequently, replace material items almost on a cyclic basis, and beards will come and (eventually) go again! We would like to remind patients to make sure their personal details are up to date when they present at reception. If we have correct addresses, phone numbers, Medicare and concession card details, and emergency contacts, it means we can provide a more efficient service plus better coordination of care (e.g. reminder letters mailed correctly; SMS alerts sent; test results conveyed).

Zostavax vaccine to prevent shingles

Shingles is the painful recurrence of the chickenpox virus and anyone who has ever had chickenpox can have an attack of shingles. Fortunately, shingles is not that common although it can be associated with ill health, stress, old age and sometimes just bad luck. The good news is that as of November 1st this year, the Zostavax vaccine to prevent shingles will be included on the Australian immunisation schedule so that people turning 70 after that date can receive the injection for free. There will also be a five-year catch up program for people aged 71 to 79 years. More details relating to patient eligibility will be available closer to the start date of the program.

New Hepatitis C treatments

There are new treatments for hepatitis C that are much safer and more effective than previously available. What's more, in Australia this treatment is covered by Medicare and the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS). Hepatitis C is acquired through exposure to infected bodily fluids, like blood. The infection is cleared naturally within six months from the body in about a quarter of people without any treatment. For those where this does not occur, untreated hepatitis C can lead to liver scarring and possibly liver cancer. The effectiveness of treatment (up to 95% cure rate) depends on how much liver scarring has already occurred, the strain of the virus, and whether there are other health impacts (such as excessive alcohol intake). Patients will usually have baseline blood tests with their doctor before being referred to a hospital outpatient clinic for assessment of liver scarring and commencement of therapy. The treatment consists of a combination of tablets, and the course typically takes 8 to 12 weeks to complete.

Not too late for the influenza immunisation

Due to the delayed availability of the Government supply of this year's influenza vaccine, some patients who are eligible for this free injection may not have received it yet. Even though we are well into the 'flu season, it is still recommended that people over the age of 65, those with a chronic illness, and pregnant women have an annual 'flu injection. Eligible patients can book in to see our clinic nurse via reception for their free influenza immunisation.

Treatment room booking fee

Since the beginning of Medicare in 1984, the Australian Government has never increased the patient rebate in line with the Consumer Price Index (CPI). Additionally, there have been several complete rebate freezes by successive Governments (both Labor and Liberal), currently at least until the year 2020. The Medicare rebate falls significantly short of the actual cost of providing quality medical services. After many years of the clinic absorbing rising costs for medical supplies in the treatment room, patients will be required to pay a set booking fee of \$15 for elective (planned) operations and procedures. The booking fee does not apply to emergency presentations. Additionally, the elective procedure itself will no longer be bulk-billed, although concession card holders and children under 16 years will usually pay no more than a \$20 gap for the procedure. However, some treatment room appointments will remain bulk-billed with no booking fee, such as childhood immunisations and 'flu clinics. Your doctor will be able to discuss with you any proposed fees so that you may make an informed decision before having a procedure.

“We are proud to be an Accredited General Practice”

