



# *The Elms Quarterly*

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



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## *Autumn 2011*

### **General Clinic News**

Whilst there have been devastating floods in Australia, plus earthquakes in New Zealand and Japan, we had our own emergency recently. We had our very own flood from a burst hot water service in the ceiling that resulted in 3 rooms and lots of carpet being damaged. Since we have had flooding before, we are getting good at dealing with it, but please excuse the appearance of the back rooms whilst they are being fixed. Despite this, we are glad that our problems are minor compared to the devastation that others have had to deal with, and our thoughts go out to them.

### **Doctor News**

Our new doctors are settling in well and we have had great feedback from patients about all of them. We hope you all welcome them to the clinic in traditional country style (they may even stay long term if they like it here!). The new doctors, all Australian trained, are Dr Emma Scriven, Dr Farnaz Sabet and Dr Harry Weisinger.

### **Medical Student News**

Some of you may have met our new medical student Eliza Muir. She is from Deakin University and is with us for the whole year. She will see some patients with supervision from one of our doctors. Seeing the medical student may be one way of getting to see your favourite doctor! Eliza has fitted right in to the clinic and is very popular with patients and staff alike. We hope the experience is a good one for her from a learning point of view, as well as socially. Patients who have seen Eliza have enjoyed the extra attention as well as having the satisfaction of helping in the training of a future doctor.

### **Appointment System**

The Elms is a popular practice and we do not like to compromise care by seeing too many patients. We have a system of booking appointments whereby some are kept in reserve until that day (that is, cannot be booked in advance). This ensures that people who are suddenly sick can get an appointment. Those with non urgent problems are encouraged to book ahead. This system has been found to be fair and is used by many practices. Please be patient if our receptionist advises you to ring in the morning of the following day. Keep in mind that these "book on the day" appointments fill up quickly, so you will need to ring early in the day.

### **Non Attendance at Appointments**

In order to provide care for as many people as possible, we need to make sure appointments are not being wasted. We are getting a number of people not attending appointments they have booked, and this means other people are missing out.

As a result, we have decided to be more pro-active on a policy we have had for years. This is charging a non attendance fee if they do not attend or cancel within 2 hours of their appointment. This fee (\$20 for a standard appointment, and more for a longer appointment) will be donated by the practice to local charities. This fee applies to everyone (even if you are normally Bulk Billed). Please consider others and cancel appointments if you do not plan to attend, or are unable to make it.

### **Travel Vaccination**

We offer advice about travel vaccines, plus prescribe and administer these vaccines at The Elms. However, you need to be organised and have them in plenty of time for them to be effective whilst you are travelling. Mostly, these vaccines need up to 6 weeks to be effective. Some can be given and are effective in as little as 2 weeks, but do not leave it to the last minute as you may miss out on good protection against diseases that are not common in Australia.

Please note that one group who are poorly immunised are people going back to their country of origin to visit family and friends, and also those children who have been raised here. These people have often lost the natural immunity they acquired growing up in their home country and need immunisation before travel. Their children are at particular risk.

### **Bowel Cancer Screening**

Please note that there is a very effective bowel cancer screening program being offered by the Federal Government with mail out test kits being sent to people aged 50, 55 and 60 years. This test on a small sample of your faeces can reduce your risk of dying from bowel cancer by a third. This applies to **all** people, including those who have **no** known risk (such as a family history). The Moorabool Shire is below the state average regarding screening uptake, with only 18.5% of the eligible population taking advantage of this test. Please encourage those around this age to do this test when it arrives in the mail.

People at high risk for bowel cancer should speak to their doctor about more specific screening. The faeces test is not the best method of screening for the high risk group (family history of bowel cancer).

### **Night Time Bed-wetting in Children**

This common problem often goes untreated. If your child is over the age they should be fully toilet trained (about age 5 years), it may be worth having a chat to your doctor about methods to assist with this. It can be a real problem in the child's development if not dealt with early, leading to loss of confidence and social difficulties.

### **Influenza Vaccination**

These are now available for the usual autumn vaccination program. If you are over 65 years old, or have a medical condition that puts you at greater risk of the 'flu (such as asthma, heart disease, diabetes and others), or if you are pregnant, you can get free government provided influenza vaccination. Please see our reception staff about booking into an immunisation clinic for this. If you are not in this group, but would like immunisation, then see a doctor for a prescription, obtain the injection from the pharmacy, and our nurse will administer it for you (the injection by the nurse is usually Bulk-billed).

### **Whooping Cough Vaccination**

The Whooping Cough epidemic continues. Please ensure your young children are up to date with their immunisations. Parents of newborn babies can also receive free Whooping Cough immunisation (which also boosts against tetanus and diphtheria). If you would like to be immunised, but are not a new parent, you can buy the immunisation from the pharmacy (with a prescription) for about \$50-60. Please discuss with your doctor or nurse.

### **Patient Surveys**

We would like to thank all our patients who have completed the practice survey, which is an important part of clinic accreditation, as well as providing us with valuable feedback. One issue common to many replies regards the frequent turnover of doctors. The Elms is proud to be involved in the postgraduate training of doctors in General Practice, and this necessitates the regular rotation of doctors through different practices so they acquire a broad experience. We share your awareness of the benefits of having permanent doctors but this has been difficult due to workforce shortages.