

The Elms Family Medical Centre

Quarterly Newsletter

Keeping you in touch with developments at our Medical Centre

www.theelms.com.au



Autumn 2017

As The Elms approaches its 23rd birthday this year, we reflect on where we have come from. When we first opened in 1994, we had less than a handful of doctors, a couple of reception staff and a paper-based filing system. We were amongst the first to introduce a clinic nurse to perform dressings, immunisations and provide patient support. The Elms was an early adopter of electronic patient records and computerisation. We were also the very first clinic in the entire Central Highlands region to achieve quality practice accreditation.

We now have nine General Practitioners, five registered nurses, eight receptionists, and four management leaders, along with multiple visiting medical and surgical specialists, psychologists, podiatrists, physiotherapist, dietician, women's ultrasound service, diagnostic pathology and a medical student. We are very proud to have grown into a comprehensive health hub through the hard work of all our staff and the continuing support of our patients.

Doctor news

We are excited to announce that Dr Carmen Lei commenced at The Elms as a full-time general practice registrar in February, and will be with us for at least the next 12 months. A graduate of Melbourne's Monash University, she has previously worked at Bendigo Hospital and the Monash Medical Centre, as well as general practice placements in Bendigo and Swan Hill. Carmen is currently studying toward the general practice specialty qualification of Fellowship of the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, and has an interest in women's health, children's health, and aged care.

Carmen joins our other four female GPs, Drs Anmar Naoum, Sue Lee, Ayesha Munir, and Ummu Rauf. Our complement of male GPs remains unchanged with Drs Rob Hosking, Woody Wu, Amit Kumar and Leon Toh making up the team.

Medical student news

We welcome our 2017 Deakin University medical student, Jared Harris, who is attached to The Elms and Bacchus Marsh Hospital for the entire year. Jared was originally from the Queensland Sunshine Coast, and prior to starting his medical studies completed training as a physiotherapist. He is the seventh Deakin medical student we have mentored and he will be involved in consultations with patients under the supervision of Dr Rob Hosking and Dr Woody Wu. Like all our previous medical students, Jared is keen to learn and is very appreciative of every chance to develop his skills and knowledge. The Elms plays an important role in the training of future doctors and we thank our patients for giving Jared the opportunity to participate in their care as part of his learning.

New hours for dietitian

Visiting dietitian, Marie Huynh, now consults fortnightly on Wednesday afternoons. She provides advice about food and nutrition to help promote good health. Marie can assist with weight management, diabetes, cardiovascular disease and aged care nutrition. Patients with private health insurance may be eligible for a rebate by having a referral from their doctor. Appointments to see Marie can be made by calling Nutrition Health & Wellbeing on (03) 9217-6421.

Physiotherapy is not only for athletes!

When most people think of who a physiotherapist treats, images of athletes and sporting types typically come to mind. However, physiotherapists manage much more than sports injuries or back pain. In fact, more physical symptoms are the result of poor fitness and lack of activity than overuse or accident. Muscle weakness, poor posture, impaired flexibility and de-compensatory movement can all result in pain and loss of function. If you have any of these symptoms, your doctor may recommend seeing a physiotherapist even if you are not an athlete. Of course, physiotherapists have particular expertise in sport related injuries and early intervention definitely improves recovery rates and outcomes.

We have a visiting physiotherapist, Mr Chong Yao, who comes to The Elms every Tuesday afternoon. Patients with private health insurance may be eligible for a rebate by having a referral from their doctor. Appointments to see Chong can be made by calling 101 Physio on (03) 9746-6852.

Skin spot checks at The Elms

With the increasing awareness of the damaging effects of the sun on our skin, most people are now wisely choosing to be “sun smart”. However, it is still a good idea to see your doctor for a skin check, especially on areas you can’t see easily yourself (like on your back) or for spots that have noticeably changed. Your GP is able to check your skin and spots, often with the aid of a magnifying device, and advise you accordingly. Most suspicious spots can also be sampled (biopsied) or cut out by your doctor in the clinic. If you have a suspicious spot that is very large or in a risky area of the body (like on the face), your doctor may suggest a surgeon perform the excision. For routine skin checks, there is usually no need to see a dermatologist (a doctor that specifically treats skin conditions). We also have a specially equipped digital camera to capture skin images which are then stored in the patient file to enable future comparison and monitoring.

If you are worried about a spot or want a skin check at the Elms, just book an appointment to see your doctor.

What is a referral actually for?

From a doctor’s point of view, a referral is a key means of conveying important and accurate information about a patient to another doctor so that the most appropriate advice and treatment can be provided. Your GP takes overall responsibility for ensuring that you are looked after, and advising when it is necessary to engage other medical practitioners for specific treatment. That is why back-dated referrals (where a patient sees a non-GP doctor first and then asks for a referral in retrospect) are disallowed by Medicare. Medicare recognises the important role of the GP as the primary care provider by making it a requirement for a patient to have a referral in order to access a financial rebate for their visit to a non-GP medical practitioner. However, it is actually not a medical or legal prerequisite to need a referral if a patient is happy to forfeit their Medicare rebate.

Even if forfeiting the Medicare rebate does not worry a patient, there is a hidden cost in not going through one’s GP. In some countries (like America) where there is not a strong focus on general practice and primary care, patients go and see different doctors for different problems on a regular basis (like a gynaecologist for routine pap smears, or an Ear Nose Throat surgeon for a sore throat). This is not only expensive and potentially unnecessary, there is also no coordination of the care. Essentially it is just lots of individual doctors each looking after individual parts of a body but with no one actually looking after the person.

So, a referral from your GP is not just a piece of paper but an important and considered document that is an integral part of your overall health care coordination (with the Medicare rebate just being the icing, and not the other way around!).

“We are proud to be an Accredited General Practice”

