

# 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 2022

The Elms is pleased to have once again achieved practice accreditation through an independent external assessment conducted by Australian General Practice Accreditation Limited (AGPAL). A requirement every three years, this rigorous process involves meeting or exceeding the practice benchmarks set by the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP). To be accredited, a practice must demonstrate a high standard in patient care, safety and service provision. The Elms is the medical clinic with the longest record of continuous accreditation in the Central Highlands region. Special thanks go to our practice manager, Tracy, and our assistant practice manager, Susanne, for their excellent work toward our accreditation success.

### Doctor news

We recently farewelled Dr Jessie Rafeld and Dr My Huong San who completed their six-month placements with us. We wish both all the best as they continue their Fellowship training program and associated examinations. In February we welcomed the arrivals of Dr Peter Nightingale and Dr Phu Ha. Peter and Phu are both registrars in the post-graduate specialist training program working toward the Fellowship of the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners. Prior to starting at The Elms, both have had experience working in various hospital specialty rotations. Peter is developing his interests in paediatrics, palliative care and men's health, and Phu enjoys men's health, preventative medicine and children's health.

Dr Amit Kumar and Dr Ummu Rauf will be mentoring final year medical students from Deakin University this year. The Elms has been a placement for medical students from Deakin University for over ten years. The students spend their time initially observing our doctors during patient appointments, and later performing some consultations under supervision. This is a very valuable learning experience for the medical students as it gives them first-hand exposure to the breadth and complexity of general practice, as well as seeing the importance of long-term medical relationships with patients. Our first medical student for 2022 is Rachel Tobin, who was originally from Ballan.

### Podiatrist news

Medical Footcare Podiatry provides a regular podiatry service from the clinic and has recently been joined by podiatrist, Mr Luke Stevens. Luke joins Ms Zantana Hagos and Mr Andy Van, with podiatry clinics being held on Monday, Tuesday and alternating Fridays. Dr Gerard Zammit (PhD), the director of Medical Footcare Podiatry, is focussing on other clinical ventures and so Luke has taken over Gerard's session times. Appointments to see a podiatrist can be made by phoning 9449 9393.

### Influenza season

After almost three years of the Covid-19 pandemic, due to the various public health measures such as mask-wearing, physical separation and frequent hand hygiene, infections like the common cold and influenza have also been significantly reduced. It has been predicted that the influenza season this coming winter may be particularly serious. To complicate matters, a fresh wave of Coronavirus may also occur, which is not unusual in the colder months. The annual influenza immunisation will have a renewed importance this year and the 'flu injection will be available sometime in late March or early April. Once supplies of the 'flu shot arrive, patients may book in with our nurses or doctors to receive their immunisation.

## **Changes to clinic Covid-19 rules**

Face masks are still necessary for entry into the clinic as we are classified as a health care location. With a large proportion of the community immunised against Covid-19 and the relative reduction in infection severity, we will generally no longer require proof of vaccination when entering the clinic. Patients who have an exemption from wearing a mask will still be requested to show evidence of vaccination. Anyone who is unvaccinated and not wearing a mask will be asked to wait outside until their appointment. Patients who have Covid-19 should not enter the clinic before day 14 after their initial positive result. These patients will be offered telehealth consultations instead.

## **Video consultations**

Although a face-to-face appointment allows the greatest degree of interaction, and a telephone appointment is convenient and uses tried and tested technology (barring a poor connection), consulting via video meets those needs halfway. The Elms uses a government-approved secure platform called CoviU for video telehealth consultations. This system does not require the patient to install any software or create an account. Prior to their video consultation, patients are sent a link via SMS or email which takes them directly to the clinic's online waiting room. After entering their name and adding a profile picture, patients then wait for the doctor to join the consultation. The minimum requirement to use video telehealth is a device connected to the internet that has a camera, speaker and microphone.

## **Fibromyalgia**

Despite being a recognised condition, fibromyalgia remains elusive in its exact cause and management. The main presentation is of widespread bodily altered sensation, mostly of pain, as well as fatigue, mental fogging, sleep disturbance and accentuated responses to stressors. The distribution of the altered pain sensation can be localised, widespread, migratory or persistent. This may be experienced as an amplified pain response to mildly painful stimuli or even non-painful stimuli. One theory is that changes in the central nervous system can lead to a persistent state of heightened neurological activation. This has been shown on functional MRI studies as well as measurement of biological markers in the fluid around the brain and spinal cord. Due to the persistent nature of these changes, modification in behaviour to avoid pain and deconditioning of the body occurs, resulting in further physical debility and mental health impacts.

Confirming the diagnosis of fibromyalgia is not only about excluding other causes. It is important to acknowledge that fibromyalgia can co-exist with other medical conditions. Non-pharmacological therapies like graded exercise, good sleep hygiene and psychological support are the mainstays of management. Medications like amitriptyline and pregabalin have modest effectiveness in fibromyalgia. Opioid analgesics and anti-inflammatories have not been shown to work and may cause problems of their own. Results of clinical trials involving cannabinoids have been disappointing. Although there is no cure for fibromyalgia, patients with the condition can still improve their quality of life with the appropriate interventions.

## **Test sensitivity and specificity**

The accuracy of any test is determined by the characteristics of the test, as well as the population it is applied to. Sensitivity refers to the ability of the test to detect every case, and specificity refers to the ability to detect only the cases. A test with low sensitivity will have a higher false negative rate, and a test with low specificity will have a higher false positive rate. Often sensitivity and specificity are competing characteristics. To complicate matters further, the rarity of a condition in a population (the prevalence) can make a test more or less useful. For example, early in the pandemic when Covid-19 was uncommon in Australia, the rapid antigen test (RAT) was not that useful due to its relatively low sensitivity compared to the polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test. Although PCR is the more accurate test, its complexity, cost and slower turn-around time for results are drawbacks when there is high disease prevalence.

**“We are proud to be an Accredited General Practice”**

