



The Elms Quarterly



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

Spring 2009

Doctor News

Patients who have attended in recent months may have had the opportunity to meet Dr Khemar Wadi, who commenced at the Elms in August. She has become very popular and we hope that she enjoys her time with us as much as we are enjoying having her here.

Congratulations to Dr Anita Manku who is now very obviously pregnant, and will be starting maternity leave in November to have her baby. Depending on the circumstances, Anita is hoping to return to the Elms part-time during 2010. We wish Anita and her husband, Sandy, all the best.

Another of our team, Dr Faiza Khan, will continue at the Elms until the end of January next year. She will then complete a 6 month term in Ararat, before returning to the Elms in the second half of 2010. Rotations to more distant communities are a requirement of registrars in the Rural Training Program. We all hope that she does not find the move too arduous, given that she has two little children.

Dr Chris Maclay and Dr Thai Nguyen are also valued members of the doctor team at the Elms whom patients have become very fond of. It is great to know that Chris will be staying with us into the foreseeable future, and that Thai is planning to stay with us at least until August 2010.

On a sadder note, Dr Annie Li has announced that she will be leaving the Elms in the middle of October this year so that she can work closer to her home in Doncaster. We have been fortunate that she has persisted with the commute to work over the last three and a half years. We wish her well.

We are currently interviewing a number of new doctors to work with us in 2010, and beyond. Information about new doctors will be posted soon on our website, www.theelms.com.au.

Swine Flu Vaccination

The H1N1 "swine" influenza vaccine is now available, and we encourage everyone to think about having this free injection. Persons most at risk, such as pregnant women, the elderly, and those with chronic medical diseases like emphysema, asthma, diabetes and heart conditions, are particularly vulnerable and should consider it a priority.

At present, the vaccine is not approved for children less than 10 years of age, although it is likely that this will change in the future. We are aware that patients may have questions about the safety and role of the injection. Feel free to speak with our nurses or your doctor about this.

Please contact our reception staff about attending the vaccination clinics we are running.

Whooping Cough vaccinations for new parents

The Victorian State Government is funding free booster injections against whooping cough for parents of all babies born after 15th June 2009. This injection also boosts immunity against tetanus and diphtheria. This initiative has been in response to the dramatic increase in the number of whooping cough cases in the past year.

Parents having this important injection will help protect their new baby, as babies do not complete their initial course of whooping cough protection until 6 months of age.

Other carers of young babies can also have the booster injection but these are not subsidised by the Government. See your doctor for a prescription if you are in this category. If you are planning a pregnancy, it is best to get your booster before the pregnancy.

Why vaccination is so important

Vaccination, also known as immunisation, is the process whereby protection against a dangerous infection is achieved by exposing the body to low levels of the inactivated agent, which stimulates a defensive immune response in the body. Unfortunately, vaccinations are opposed by a minority of people who believe that they are dangerous, and hence choose not to have their children (or themselves) immunised.

However, being immunised has benefits not only to the recipient, but also to the community as a whole. By having a large proportion of the population covered, it helps stop outbreaks of the disease as the infection then does not have many people that can transmit it. Also, as immunity levels vary from person to person, having the majority of people immunised helps protect those who are most vulnerable, such as the elderly, children, the infirm and pregnant women.

For those trying to make an informed choice about immunisation, further information can be found at the Australian Government website, www.immunise.health.gov.au.

Electronic Medicare claims at The Elms

We are pleased to offer **Medicare Online** to assist with claiming your Medicare rebate electronically. If you notify Medicare of your banking details (forms available at reception, or online at the Medicare Australia website) then we can send your claim directly to Medicare and you will receive your rebate in your nominated bank account within a few days. This convenient service means you do not have to go to a Medicare office to claim your rebates.

Please speak with our receptionists for more information about this service.

Ozdocsonline

As mentioned in previous newsletters, this is a secure means of communicating with your doctor online via the website www.ozdocsonline.com.au. It is free to register for this service at this website. A small fee is required to then use the service, which is ideal for prescription requests, comments about test results, and non-urgent online advice and consultation (where physical examination is not necessary).

We do **not** use regular open e-mail for communicating as it is not secure, with the risk of compromised confidentiality.

Completion of forms for patients

Most forms to be filled in by your doctor (such as Centrelink forms, medical certificates and insurance forms) require statements about a patient's physical or mental health. This means that it is a legal requirement for the patient to whom the form applies, to **attend in person**. Please note that completion of forms is not considered a medical emergency, so a non-urgent appointment will normally be provided.

Your Health Records

It is important for your medical record to be kept up-to-date and relevant throughout your life as it is a vital tool to document your health. Thus if you have tests or procedures performed elsewhere (such as by specialists or emergency departments), it is a good idea to request that a copy of results or reports be forwarded here.

The Elms uses a fully computerised record keeping system that is kept confidential by password security, with access limited to authorised staff. Our system is **not** connected to any external national system of records. Your information may only be released with your permission, or in rare instances, by subpoena from a Court of Law.

If you require a copy of part or the entirety of your health record, there may be a charge for the reproduction of the information. Alternatively, you may view your health record in the company of a doctor or nurse who can explain the contents to you. A charge may apply for this service.