

The Elms



Family Medical Centre

Quarterly Newsletter

Keeping you in touch with developments at our Medical Centre

www.theelms.com.au

Spring 2013

We celebrated the official opening of our new expanded and renovated clinic on 19th July 2013. To mark this special occasion, we had a traditional ribbon cutting attended by the Honourable Tanya Plibersek MP, Federal Minister for Health and Medical Research, the Honourable Catherine King MP, Federal Minister for Regional Australia, Local Government and Territories, and Dr Mukesh Haikerwal AO, Chair of the World Medical Association. Holding the ends of the ribbon were the children of the Jensz family at one end, and Mrs Dorothy Gray at the other, symbolising the care provided by The Elms to everyone from all age groups.

July also saw our belated clinic birthday function, which was held at La Do Vietnamese-Thai Restaurant in North Melbourne. The venue is actually owned by Dr Chuong Nguyen who works at The Elms. It was a fantastic night of great food and entertainment, courtesy of the brave few who gave karaoke a go!

Doctor News

Congratulations to Dr Nyree O'Connor who has successfully completed her examinations to achieve the Fellowship of the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, the qualification recognising her as a specialist General Practitioner. Nyree has been with us since August 2011 and continues her special interests in aged care, paediatrics and women's health.

August saw the much anticipated return of Dr Jessie Low. Jessie first started with us in early 2012 and has just completed her six month outer rural placement in Ararat. Gaining experience in different clinics and settings is an important part of the specialist training in family medicine.

We would like to welcome Dr Arif Ordukaya who is a registrar in the program for the Fellowship of the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners. Alf completed training as a physiotherapist through the University of Sydney before completing medical school as a post-graduate. He has previously worked at the Bendigo Hospital as a medical officer in various rotations including emergency, paediatrics and orthopaedics.

A temporary farewell to Dr Rakhi Basu who after one year at The Elms has gone to Beaufort for her six month outer rural placement. Rakhi has plans to return in the future to continue her combined interests in general practice and hospital obstetric care in Bacchus Marsh.

New Clinic Opening Hours

In response to the need for more evening appointments from Monday to Friday, and the low demand for Sunday and public holiday appointments, The Elms has changed its opening hours. We are now open longer every weeknight, until 8pm, but will be closed on Sunday and public holidays. This is particularly handy for patients who travel back from Melbourne after work, or for others who find it more convenient to avoid taking time off during the day. This represents an overall increase in the number of hours we are open each week. Our Saturday hours are the same as before, from 8am to 12.30pm. Our after hours arrangement remains unchanged, with many of our doctors participating in the emergency department roster at the Bacchus Marsh Hospital.

Viruses, Common Colds and Antibiotics

Even though we have passed winter, there are still frequent cases of the common cold, which is caused by a large number of different viruses (over 200 types!). These viruses can be transmitted from one person to another through droplets dispersed into the air from coughing and sneezing, as well as from direct contact with surfaces that have been contaminated with these droplets. Each time our immune system develops a defence against one, the virus changes its identity to avoid detection the next time. Unfortunately, this means that it is highly unlikely that a true cure for the common cold will be found.

There is little solid evidence that supplements or vitamins can prevent a cold or hasten its recovery, however it is popular to take things like vitamin C, zinc and Echinacea. Regardless of what is taken, most common colds clear up in about one to two weeks. Treatment consists of resting, keeping up fluids and treating symptoms with paracetamol or ibuprofen, along with the sparing use of decongestants. Taking some time off work is usually a good idea as it helps with recovery and also reduces the spread of infection to others.

Antibiotics are not indicated for treating a common cold as they are not effective against viruses. However, in some people the common cold can sometimes progress to more serious infections, such as pneumonia and sinusitis. It is advisable to see your doctor if your symptoms are not improving over 48 hours, if high fevers persist despite paracetamol, if there is headache or vomiting, or if there is increasing lethargy. These symptoms do not necessarily mean antibiotics are required but do indicate the need to be reviewed for other possible causes.

Lower Back Pain

It is not infrequent for people to have a sore lower back, sometimes for no apparent reason. The lower back is just like any other part of the body – it can suffer from injury, degeneration through aging or excessive use, and much less commonly some specific damaging process. People with lower back pain may see their doctor because the pain is persistent, or is particularly severe, or if there are associated symptoms that worry them.

The lower back is a very complex part of the body, made up of the vertebrae separated by soft tissue discs, held together by interlocking joints, strengthened by a series of ligaments, and powered by large spinal muscles. Any of these parts can be the source of pain and it can be very difficult to determine where the pain is originating from. This is because the degree of pain is not necessarily related to the amount of physical change.

Patients seeing their doctor for lower back pain are often surprised that they are not sent for radiological investigation. The majority of cases of lower back pain will settle with time and symptomatic management, meaning early testing is unnecessary and could potentially cause more harm than good. One misconception about the importance of scans is that they are necessary for diagnosis in every case. There is no scan that shows up pain. Scans only show physical features down to a certain size, meaning that they are inconclusive when the source of pain is too small to be seen, or where the pain is due to the disruption of function rather than of structure.

It is best to speak with your doctor to discuss what management is most appropriate for you.

“We are proud to be an Accredited General Practice”

