

# 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)



### Spring 2021

With the enthusiastic adoption of telehealth, we are now encouraging the use of video-based consultations to supplement telephone consultations. There are times when a face-to-face appointment is not convenient or possible, such as due to work commitments or during Covid quarantine. For video-based consultations, we use a secure Government-endorsed platform called CoviU (pronounced 'Co-View'). When booking the video consultation, our receptionist will send the patient an internet link via SMS or email, which is used to sign in at the time of the appointment. Patients using this for the first time should sign in about 5 minutes before the scheduled appointment to complete a short registration process. Video-based consultations may be accessed by patients using a smart phone or a computer with a web camera.

### Doctor news

Dr Andrew Pandza and Dr Edward Mulvey were recently farewelled after completing their registrar rotation with us. Both have now progressed to their next posting and we wish both Andrew and Edward the best for their future medical careers.

We also said a fond 'good-bye' to Dr Umanga De Silva who started at The Elms in January 2020. For family reasons, Umanga had to make the difficult decision to reduce her hours and ultimately discontinue her position here. During her time with us, she proved to be an excellent doctor as well as a valued colleague. We will miss Umanga and hope that she will continue to enjoy every success.

The Elms welcomes our new registrar, Dr Jessie Rafeld, who has started her six-month term with us. A graduate of Melbourne University, she is in the process of completing the specialist qualification in general practice through the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners. Prior to the Elms, Jessie has worked in general practice in the western suburbs of Melbourne, as well as at the Austin Hospital, Sunshine and Footscray Hospitals. She joins our other current registrar, Dr My Huong San.

### Exemptions to mask wearing – how does this apply to our clinic

As a health care setting, it is a priority that everyone within the building wear an approved faced covering in shared areas, such as in the waiting room. This applies even if a person has no symptoms of a respiratory condition. However, we acknowledge that there are legitimate reasons why a person may not be able to wear a mask. In these circumstances, patients will be asked to wait outside so that others within the clinic are not placed at avoidable risk. At the time of the appointment, the doctor will ring to determine the suitability for the patient to enter the clinic for a consultation. Patients with undiagnosed respiratory symptoms should not enter the building, even with a face covering. It is most appropriate for such patients to have a telehealth consultation, or to attend a hospital with appropriate 'hot zone' isolation facilities and full personal protective equipment.

### Certificates for care giving

We have many local patients relying on family or other care-givers who have to travel from Melbourne during pandemic lockdowns. Our patients may ask their doctor for a letter confirming that they are receiving such care. This is in case their care provider is asked to show documentation to enforcement authorities.

## **Keeping your details up to date**

Quite a few of our patients have been attending over many years and it is not unusual for contact details, Medicare cards and personal status to change. Our reception staff will routinely ask to ensure that your details are up to date. Additionally, we hope to introduce new ways to make contact simpler in the future, such as through SMS and email, for reminders and even results. This requires the correct contact information as well as documented patient consent.

## **Requests from third parties to perform tests**

A person can achieve overall health through various means including a balanced diet, regular exercise, minimising stress and preventative action. Occasionally, this may be with the assistance of health care providers beside your regular doctor. From time to time, patients present with a list of tests that have been recommended by their alternative health care provider. This provides a good opportunity to discuss the purpose of these tests. However, Medicare has strict rules about funding tests and so it is not always possible for your doctor to request such tests. Medicolegally, the doctor requesting any test is fully responsible for the counselling, interpretation and follow up of the results. Hence it is only appropriate for your doctor to request tests if they deem it medically relevant and in compliance with Medicare regulations. Tests may be arranged by the patient's alternative health care provider but they will not be funded by Medicare.

## **Annual narcotic use reviews**

Patients with long term persistent pain may be prescribed narcotic analgesics to manage their symptoms. Also known as opioids, these medications are highly regulated under the Controlled Substances Act. Patients generally only receive one month supply at a time, PBS authority is usually required to access funding, and the prescribing clinic may require a State-issued permit specifically for that patient. Along with mandatory checking by the doctor on Safe Script (an online record of these prescriptions for all Victorians), patients are also required to undergo an annual narcotic use review with a different doctor every 12 months to ensure appropriate usage. Despite all these checks and balances, the overuse of prescribed narcotic medications remains a problem in our society. Sometimes the narcotic medication may be adding to illness burden without actually improving quality of life or function. Please speak with your doctor if you have concerns about the use of narcotic medications and whether they are addressing your pain condition.

## **Life-threatening battery ingestion**

A hidden danger in our homes is the button-shaped battery. Looking like a shiny coin or silver tablet, these batteries are found in many electronic devices and toys. The lithium variety (with various names like CR2025, CR2032, etc) is particularly dangerous. After ingestion, the battery can burn its way through the lining of the oesophagus, stomach or intestine. If not identified in time, there is a significant risk of death. Vigilance is required to avoid accidental ingestion by a child, and if suspected, an urgent Xray is required to rule it out.

## **Curly hair vs straight hair**

Fashion may dictate whether curly hair or straight hair is preferred but if left alone, hair will tend to behave according to a number of biological factors. At its most basic, curly hairs grow out of follicles that are oval in cross-section, and straight hairs form from round shaped follicles. Under a microscope, curly hair has a slightly flattened profile (like tape) whereas straight hair is round (like fishing line). Over a lifetime, a person's hair type can change due to age, hormonal effects, medications (like post chemotherapy) and illness. There is a strong genetic basis for hair type and given that our hair forms a large part of our personal image, it is not surprising that people may spend hundreds, if not thousands, of dollars on hair care every year.

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

