

The Elms Family Medical Centre

Quarterly Newsletter

Keeping you in touch with developments at our Medical Centre

www.theelms.com.au

Summer 2024-2025

As announced in the last newsletter, your doctor now has an additional option to inform patients of test results via SMS. This SMS will indicate either no further action is required, or that a review appointment is necessary. At their discretion, your doctor may still advise that they will make contact by phone to pass on results. Changes to Medicare mean that when these phone calls for results are made, the patient is required to confirm that the call occurred. To complete this process, the patient will receive an SMS from the clinic which asks the patient to identify themselves with their date of birth, and to click 'accept' on the link to finalise.

Doctor news

Our GP registrars, Dr Binari Wijesundara and Dr Christopher Ee, who started with us in August, have been granted an extension to remain at The Elms for a full 12 months. This is a great outcome as the training program usually limits placements to 6 months in one location. Having the full year means there is less interruption to their work experience, and better continuity of care for patients. Binari and Chris have proven to be valuable members of our team and we are very pleased to have them for the additional term.

Medical student news

Elisha Johns, our Deakin University 3rd year medical student, has completed his year-long attachment with us as part of the Rural Community Clinical School program. We thank our patients for sharing their time with Elisha through parallel consulting with Dr Amit Kumar, Dr Ummu Rauf and Dr Woody Wu. Elisha is planning to return in 2025 during his final year of medicine for his general practice rotation. We look forward to welcoming Elisha back next year, along with a new 3rd year medical student from Deakin University.

Psychologist news

Visiting psychologist, Mr Melas Khole, has recently updated his contact details. Formerly of Ranges Psychological Services, Melas is now working under the banner of Aware Minds Psychology. He has been consulting at The Elms since 2016 and will continue his usual sessions on Thursdays. Existing referrals to see Melas are not affected by this change. To book an appointment with Melas, please contact him via email: info_mindseye101@bigpond.com

Skin check appointments

With summer upon us, it is a timely opportunity to have a skin check. Australia has one of the world's highest incidences of skin cancer, and sun exposure is the biggest avoidable risk factor. Being sun-aware can have a significant impact on the likelihood of developing skin cancer. Having regular skin checks (especially on parts of the body you cannot easily see yourself) is an effective way to detect suspicious spots early. All our doctors can perform skin checks however Dr Tahmina Sultana has a particular interest and additional qualifications relating to dermoscopy (examining the skin using a special magnifier). A full skin check is performed during a dedicated 30-minute appointment, and may be booked via reception. Patients should wear clothes that can be easily removed in sections to allow adequate skin examination.

Gender affirming care

In recognition of the expanded concept of gender, doctors and staff may enquire about a patient's preferred way to be addressed, such as their chosen name and pronoun (such as he, she, or they). We can then use the appropriate wording when addressing patients, and when completing documentation like referrals. This is relevant as not everyone identifies with the gender that they were assigned at birth (trans-gender). A person who identifies with the same gender as assigned at birth is called cis-gender. Those who do not identify as either male or female are termed non-binary. Since gender identity is self-determined and not 'diagnosed', only the individual can specify how they are addressed.

Review of clinic fees

In line with inflation and the consumer price index (CPI), we have had to increase our private, and concession fees, effective from 1st December. Despite the increase, they will remain below the fees recommended by the Australian Medical Association (AMA). We will continue to bulk-bill services such as GP management plans, and nursing services like immunisations and wound care.

Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) vaccination program

The Australian Government has announced that funding for a new program to tackle RSV infection will start from early 2025. This program provides vaccination against RSV (Abrysvo) for all expectant mothers. Mothers who have the vaccination during pregnancy will pass on protective antibodies to their newborn babies. Alternatively, newborn babies up to the age of 24 months whose mothers did not receive the RSV vaccination will be eligible for an injection of protective antibodies (Beyfortus). RSV infection can be serious and can result in hospitalisation. This program is expected to reduce the need for hospital care due to RSV by 90%.

Transition from Ozempic to Wegovy for weight management

Ozempic (semaglutide) was first introduced as a treatment for diabetes but quickly became recognised as an effective weight loss medication. The widespread use of Ozempic for weight loss quickly led to a shortage around the world. A specific version for weight loss, called Wegovy, has now been approved for use and all patients on Ozempic for weight loss will need to change over to Wegovy. Unfortunately, Wegovy costs twice as much as Ozempic, despite having the same active ingredient (semaglutide).

The gut microbiome and health

The naturally occurring bacteria in the gastrointestinal tract (microbiome) plays an important role in health and wellbeing which is only partially understood. Most of us would have had the experience of upsetting our 'good bacteria' through the taking of antibiotics for an infection. The imbalance caused to the microbiome can take up to 3 months to restore itself. Taking pro-biotics (supplements of 'good bacteria') can help restore this balance but it is emerging that pre-biotics (supplements that feed, encourage or support 'good bacteria') may be more important. This is because everybody has a unique microbiome profile and adding specific 'good bacteria' has less impact than promoting the gut's natural flora through a balanced diet. One possible example of this effect is how people who do not have coeliac disease (gluten sensitivity) may feel better on a gluten-free diet. Gluten can act as a pro-biotic for certain bacteria in some people that then upsets the microbiome of that person.

More bacteria than human

Reinforcing the significance of bacteria to human health and function, it has been estimated that each of us is made up of more bacteria than human cells (39 trillion bacteria vs 30 trillion human cells). Most of these bacteria live on our skin and in our bowel. So, there may be an element of truth when people say they feel 'more human' after having a morning shower and a visit to the toilet for a bowel action!

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