

The Elms Family Medical Centre

Quarterly Newsletter

Keeping you in touch with developments at our Medical Centre

www.theelms.com.au



Winter 2017

As part of our clinic quality assurance process, we recently conducted a patient survey to identify areas for improvement. We would like to thank our patients who participated. As a result, we have become aware that there was some patient uncertainty about after-hours care, home visit availability, and also the option to contact your doctor directly. The Elms is open until 8pm on weekdays and we provide care outside of normal clinic hours by partaking in the Bacchus Marsh Hospital Urgent Care Centre roster. Patients needing medical assistance after-hours can present to the local hospital. Of course, for emergencies, it is always advisable to call an ambulance on 000. Our doctors provide home visits for established patients within the township of Bacchus Marsh who are too ill to travel to the clinic. These are usually performed during the doctor's lunch break, hence requests for the same day must be made prior to 11.00am. Alternatively, if you are too ill to come to the clinic, you are welcome to telephone for advice. You can contact your doctor by calling reception who can pass your message on. Your doctor can then return your call when not consulting.

We have also received requests via our suggestion box for a bin in the waiting area, as well as a water dispenser for patient use. We have previously trialled providing a waiting room bin but due to bad smells (and inappropriate items like dirty nappies and full cups) plus the tendency for children to knock them over, we ask that patients take their rubbish with them. We do, however, have bins in the toilets for small items. Drinking water is available by asking our receptionists.

Staff news

We are very proud of the loyalty of our staff and their dedication to the clinic. Major milestones were recently achieved by two of our long-serving members. Our assistant practice manager, Vicki Borg, reached her fifteenth year with us. Judy Higgs, our full-time practice nurse, completed her tenth year. In this day and age of high job turnover, we are privileged to have such stability and consistency. Congratulations to Vicki and Judy on your achievement, and thank you for your stellar efforts!

New cardiac ultrasound service

Visiting specialist cardiologist, Dr John Zhu, has recently started performing echocardiograms (heart ultrasounds) at The Elms. This service is available once a month on Saturday mornings by appointment. An echocardiogram may be recommended by your doctor to assess heart function in conditions such as breathlessness, fatigue, following a heart attack, irregular pulse, or an unusual heart sound. The test is performed in the privacy of our procedure room. A referral from your doctor is required to access this service.

Physiotherapist news

Mr Abraam Mikhail, physiotherapist, has recently commenced at The Elms and is available every Tuesday afternoon. He is part of 101 Physio and has a special interest in shoulder, back and hip pain, in addition to post-surgical rehabilitation and general musculoskeletal conditions. Abraam also supervises patient hydrotherapy programs at Melton Waves and performs dry needling as one of several treatment techniques. More information about physiotherapy services offered can be found on the 101 Physio website www.101physio.com.au and appointments can be made by phoning (03) 9746-6852.

Podiatry news

With the increase in demand for feet and nail care, Medical Footcare Podiatry has expanded the number of days this service is available. In addition to Monday and Tuesdays, a podiatrist will also be consulting alternate Thursdays at The Elms. Appointments to see Gerard Zammit and Nick Squillari can be made by phoning (03) 9449-9393, and more information about their services can be found on the Medical Footcare website www.medicalfootcare.com.au.

Influenza immunisation

In order to make receiving an influenza immunisation as convenient as possible for all patients, The Elms runs regular “flu clinics”. Patients over the age of 65, pregnant women, those with chronic medical conditions, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders over 15 years of age, are eligible for the free Government-funded injection. Patients outside of these eligible groups can have a private flu injection for a flat \$10 fee, which is supplied by The Elms below cost price. All our flu injections cover against the four common strains of the virus and appointments can be made by booking through reception. Flu injection visits are bulk-billed.

Changes to pap smear intervals delayed

In May this year, the interval between pap smears was meant to change from 2 years to every 5 years, with the introduction of a new method of analysing the collected cervical sample. Due to a Government delay in the implementation of the new register for pap smears, this has unfortunately been postponed until 1st December 2017. Women are advised not to delay having their pap smears if it is due now. The new test is collected in the same manner as previously. However, by analysing for Human Papilloma Virus rather than pre-cancer cells, it is able to predict the risk of cervical cancer much earlier, hence the 5-year interval between tests. This new test is so predictive that despite being performed every 5 years, it is actually still more accurate than the older test done every 2 years. Cervical cancer screening is recommended for all women aged 18 to 69 years, who have ever been sexually active.

Use of electronic devices and bedtime

With the rise in popularity of electronic devices like smart phones and tablets, it is not unusual for people to use them right up to bedtime. One of the hazards of screen use is the exposure to “blue light” which is very similar in hue to bright daylight. The human eye has evolved to interpret “blue light” as meaning daytime, and it sets the body clock according to this exposure. The result of evening use of screens is the disruption of the body’s day-night cycle, leading to insomnia and poor-quality sleep. The best habit is to restrict screen time in the evening but this may not be possible. A compromise is to adjust the screen to reduce the amount of “blue light” emitted.

On a TV screen and computer monitor, this can be found under the colour temperature setting by choosing a “warm” mode. This does give a slight yellowish tinge to the screen but our eyes quickly adjust to this. Most smart phones and tablets will have a similar setting, such as “night mode” or “blue light filter”. There are also yellow-tinted glasses that can be worn to achieve a similar effect. E-book readers, like Kindle devices, usually use a different screen technology call E-ink or electronic paper display, that relies on ambient light (just like a real paper page). This type of screen is inherently more sleep friendly.

The phasing out of incandescent light bulbs and the introduction of compact fluorescent tubes and light-emitting diode (LED) lamps has possibly also contributed to sleep cycle disruption. Unless a “warm white” version is chosen (as opposed to “cool white”), “blue light” exposure will occur. This is particularly relevant in bedrooms and places of rest. There are now even “smart LED” bulbs that can switch between daytime and night time modes!

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