

The Elms Family Medical Centre

Quarterly Newsletter

Keeping you in touch with developments at our Medical Centre

www.theelms.com.au

Winter 2022

The Elms has made the difficult decision to reduce bulk-billing. Effective from 1st July 2022, concession rates will apply to patients with a pension card, health care card, and children under 16 years of age. We will continue to bulk-bill Enhanced Primary Care (EPC) consultations such as GP Management Plans (GPMP), Team Care Arrangements (TCA), 45+ health checks and 75+ health checks. Veteran's Affairs Gold Card holders will also continue to be bulk-billed, as will nursing services like immunisations and wound care.

The change is due to inaction by successive Governments in addressing the rising cost of providing quality medical care. Bulk-billing is when a health care provider accepts the Medicare Rebate amount as the total and only payment for a medical service, rather than charging for the usual cost of the service. Your Medicare rebate is a subsidy that the Australian Government contributes toward your medical treatment. The cost of providing health care has been rising by 5% every year. The Government did not increase your Medicare Rebate at all between 2014-2018 and it has only gone up by 0.5% per year since. Quality care is no longer sustainable based on bulk-billing. The income from a consultation goes toward the running of the entire clinic (such as staff wages, rent, power, equipment, insurance, etc) and not just to cover the doctor's fee.

Australia is facing a healthcare crisis, with a forecast shortfall of over 9,000 full-time GPs by 2030. Bacchus Marsh is particularly hard hit as we were re-classified by the Government as a non-rural location under Medicare a few years ago, meaning we no longer receive rural incentive funding, infrastructure support, or recognition as an area of medical workforce shortage. The Government does not classify Bacchus Marsh as a Distribution Priority Area (DPA) for GPs, severely limiting our ability to recruit new doctors to work here even when they want to.

The doctor shortage in Bacchus Marsh is a result of community growth in the region coupled with difficulty recruiting medical workforce. The Elms has been continually advertising but unfortunately there is not a pool of GPs 'out there' looking for work. This scenario is echoed in many other sectors facing staff shortages, including aged care, education, hospitality and farming. Given that primary health care funding and GP availability is a Federal Government responsibility, we encourage you to contact your Federal Member to discuss how they propose to support patient access to quality and affordable general practice.

Contact details:

Ms Catherine King MP for Ballarat at catherine.king.mp@aph.gov.au or phone 03 5338 8123

Mr Sam Rae MP for Hawke at sam.rae@vic.alp.org.au

Doctor news

We are saddened to announce that Dr Anmar Naoum will be leaving The Elms at the end of June. Anmar started here in 2013 and has been an invaluable part of our team. Her achievements included completing the Fellowship of the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners in 2016. Her contribution to patient care over the last nine years at The Elms, the Bacchus Marsh Hospital and at the local nursing homes has been greatly appreciated by this community. After commuting from the northern suburbs for many of those years, she has had to gradually reduce her hours for family reasons. Anmar will continue to work in general practice closer to her home and we are sure that her patients here will miss her as much as we will. We wish Anmar the very best for her future and we hope that her many patients have the opportunity to thank her and say good-bye.

Psychologist news

In April we had another departure from The Elms with Ms Helena Rudic, psychologist, relocating interstate. She had been consulting at The Elms since 2019 as a member of the visiting Ranges Psychological Services team. We wish Helena well and thank her for helping many of our patients through her counselling. We continue to have psychologist, Mr Melas Khole, visiting on a weekly basis.

Preparing for winter infections

Patients are reminded that after several years of almost flu-free winters, this year is already showing an early surge of influenza infections. Additionally, Covid-19 is still lingering in the community, with daily case numbers for Victoria currently in the many thousands. Contracting either infection can bring serious illness and we encourage all patients to get their 'flu injection and Covid-19 vaccinations as soon as they can. Please speak with our reception to book 'flu injections. For Covid-19 vaccinations, please go to www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au for more information about availability.

Expanded use of SMS for reminders

A recent software upgrade now allows us to send SMS reminders to patients for scheduled events such as upcoming appointments, follow-up pathology or radiology tests, and required clinical reviews. This will significantly reduce the impact on the environment by minimising paper consumption and physical delivery. Patients without a mobile phone will continue to receive reminders by post. It is the responsibility of the patient to ensure that they inform reception of any changes to their contact details to protect the personal nature of such communications. If you wish to opt out of this service, please inform your doctor, practice nurse or reception staff.

Ozdocsonline

Ozdocsonline is a secure electronic means of directly communicating with your doctor. This service, which incurs a small fee to use, allows you to request prescription renewals, as well as answers to your personal medical queries via an online portal. However, it is not always possible for your doctor to adequately assess your circumstances, in which case you will be advised to make an appointment for a face-to-face consultation. Patient registration is free and there is no ongoing cost to remain registered. If you are interested in this service, please speak with your doctor or our receptionists.

Advance care planning

An advance care plan is a formal document that is used to inform those around us of our health care wishes in the event that we cannot communicate with our carers. It is similar to a will, except that rather than dealing with our estate and assets, an advance care plan is all about our medical treatment preferences and end of life care. Many of us may have spoken informally to family and friends about such things as resuscitation, life support, and organ donation. However, having it in a written document which is properly signed and witnessed ensures that there is certainty about these decisions, especially as our recollection of prior conversations with loved ones may vary. Please speak with your doctor or our clinic nurses if you would like further information about advance care plans.

As tall as you are wide

On average, the distance measured between the tips of the middle fingers when the arms are held outstretched is very close to the person's height. We are also about 1cm taller in the morning than in the afternoon due to the gradual compression of our spinal discs by gravity during the day. Similarly, astronauts in space can grow in height by up to 3%. However, they shrink back to normal after returning to Earth.

“Complete ongoing care for you and your family”

