

The Elms Family Medical Centre

Quarterly Newsletter

Keeping you in touch with developments at our Medical Centre

www.theelms.com.au



Summer 2020/2021

2020 has certainly been challenging on so many levels. No doubt most will look forward to the New Year with the hope that the Covid-19 pandemic can be reined in. The vast majority of people get the message and are doing all the little things (like hand hygiene, physical distancing and mask wearing) which make a big difference. Australia is doing better than most other countries in this respect, although the battle won't be over until a safe and effective vaccine is available. Widespread uptake of the vaccine is necessary for it to have any chance of stamping out this pandemic. The staff at The Elms thank our patients for adapting to all the changes that have been put in place to limit the spread of Coronavirus, and we wish everyone a healthy Christmas season and a lockdown-free New Year.

Doctor news

Dr Umanga DeSilva is a specialist GP who started at The Elms in January 2020. She currently works part-time here whilst she pursues her other interest in gender-diverse healthcare at a clinic in Melbourne. It is now widely recognised that the binary model of gender (male and female) does not adequately describe the range of gender identities that exist. Many cultures have historically had more than the two familiar genders, for example, in India the hijra are long considered to be a third gender. Umanga also has particular interests in women's health, paediatrics, Indigenous health, and mental health.

Staff news

Several staff members have recently achieved long-service milestones. Our practice manager, Mandy, and our lead receptionist, Denise, have both reached their 25th year with The Elms. Leonie, who is another of our receptionists, has been with us for 20 years. One of our clinic nurses, Catherine, has reached her first 5 years. We are very fortunate to have such loyal and dedicated staff, and we are appreciative of their tireless effort and constant pursuit of quality. Congratulations to Mandy, Denise, Leonie and Catherine, and thank you for being so amazing!

Telehealth service

One of the innovations that has been propelled by the Covid-19 pandemic is the widespread use of telehealth consultations. Although telehealth refers to both telephone and video consulting, the vast majority of cases rely on the telephone due to technology hurdles limiting the use of video. Medicare funding at present allows for bulk-billed telehealth for concession card holders and children under 16 years of age (as long as the patient has been seen in person at the clinic within the previous 12 months). Private fees apply otherwise. When telehealth is suitable, patients have found the experience convenient, time-saving and effective, without the hassle of travelling, parking and even having to take time off work.

Drinking water for patients

With warmer weather arriving, maintaining adequate hydration can become more difficult. Patients may request drinking water at reception. Filtered water is provided by our staff in single-use cups, or patient's water bottles can be re-filled. Please notify staff of any spills so that they may be cleaned up.

SafeScript

To assist in the safe prescribing of certain dangerous medications, Victoria has a real-time prescription monitoring system called SafeScript. Medications monitored by this service include narcotic pain killers and many of the sedatives. The use of SafeScript by doctors and pharmacists is mandatory and patients cannot opt out. Every time your doctor prescribes one of the monitored medications, an automatic alert is provided which indicates whether there has been excessive use or multiple prescribers consulted. This may prompt a discussion with your doctor about medication safety. Reducing patient harm is the aim of SafeScript, by helping identify those who may be at risk through using these potentially dangerous medications.

Avoiding long waits for pathology collection

Australian Clinical Labs provides pathology collection at The Elms and is available from 8:30 am to 4:30 pm on weekdays, and from 8:30 am to 12:30 pm on Saturdays. Although there is no historical pattern to predict busy or quiet days, early mornings are usually the most hectic as patients who are having fasting blood tests tend to arrive at opening time. If your requested test does not require fasting, then it might be quicker to attend later in the morning or in the afternoon to avoid the fasting crowd. Queuing is determined by taking a numbered ticket from outside the pathology room.

Patient reminders

The Elms has an active reminder service for patients so that they are alerted when a test is due or a review is required. Common reminders include cervical screening, follow up blood tests and chronic disease management plan reviews. However, some reminders such as for mammograms and bowel screening, may be provided by third parties like Breast Screen Victoria and the National Bowel Screening program. Reminders are no longer provided for childhood immunisations and the influenza immunisation. For reminders to be effective, it is important that we have up to date contact details such as mailing address and telephone numbers. Please advise reception if you need to update contact details.

Cash – it's so yesterday!

Even prior to Covid-19, the use of cash (notes and coins) has been in decline due to the transition over to electronic transactions. In addition to being more secure, carrying a debit or credit card is much easier than a wad of notes and a handful of coins. The use of contactless payment (Tap and Go) also reduces the risk of transmitting germs by not having to handle physical money. The more tech savvy may even use their mobile phone or smart watch instead of a separate card. Patients using electronic payment can also receive their Medicare rebate automatically and seamlessly back into their bank account. Interestingly, in the early stages of the pandemic, there was an upsurge of money being withdrawn from banks as people hoarded physical cash to keep at home.

Flipped on the inside

Our inner organs are generally laid out in a uniform way as depicted in anatomy charts. However, due to the complex way the human embryo develops, some rare genetic variations can occur which can literally mean the insides can be swapped from left to right. This occurs in approximately 1 per 10,000 people. Dextrocardia is the term used when the heart is flipped so that it is formed in the right side of the chest rather than the usual left side. A step further is situs inversus where all the internal organs are formed in a mirror image to normal. As a result, appendicitis might cause pain on the 'wrong' side of the abdomen, or an ECG (heart tracing) look bizarre. These conditions are usually compatible with normal life and health unless other anomalies are present. It is unknown whether there is any link between having dextrocardia or situs inversus with being left or right-handed. 1 in 10 people are left-handed.

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