

# 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)



### Winter 2021

The Government is expanding the Covid-19 vaccination program and it now includes everyone in Victoria over the age of 40 years. Earlier phases of the program targeted residents and workers in aged and disability care, as well as front-line emergency and quarantine personnel, and people with chronic medical conditions. Due to the emerging, albeit rare, link between the AstraZeneca vaccine and certain types of blood clots, the Government has made the decision to avoid its widespread use in people under the age of 50 years. People younger than 50 years of age have been recommended to have the Pfizer vaccine (unless they have already had the first dose of the AstraZeneca vaccine, in which case it is safe to have the second dose of the AstraZeneca injection when due 12 weeks later).

Vaccine hesitancy is becoming a hurdle in the strategy against Covid-19. Without a sufficient proportion of the community immunised, it is unlikely that we will be able to return to life as we knew it. Infection outbreaks and the risk of sudden lockdowns and travel bans will remain a high probability. People reluctant to have the vaccine should consider the low risk of serious side effects versus the personal danger of contracting Coronavirus, as well as the part we all play in protecting society and each other. We know that although vaccination won't prevent catching Coronavirus completely, both the AstraZeneca and Pfizer vaccines are highly effective in preventing hospitalisation and death from Coronavirus. Those postponing having the vaccine may risk long delays in the event of more waves of community infection. Please speak with your doctor if you want to discuss the Coronavirus vaccine and its rollout.

The Covid-19 vaccine is available at Government-determined sites (The Elms is not one of them) and State-run mass vaccination centres. For further information about accessing the vaccine, please go to the website [www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au](http://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au) or by calling the 24-hour Coronavirus Hotline on 1800 675 398.

### Thank you to Mandy; Welcome to Tracy

The Elms is saddened to announce that our long-serving practice manager, Mandy, has decided to step down from that role at the end of June so that she can focus on family commitments. Mandy has been at The Elms since its inception in 1994, initially as a receptionist and subsequently becoming our practice manager in 2007. She has been central to the growth and development of the clinic, including project managing the extension and renovation of the practice in 2013, and ensuring that we always exceeded the benchmarks required to maintain our General Practice Accreditation. Mandy has been our longest serving practice manager and she leaves an impressive and enduring legacy through her contribution to the Elms. We owe Mandy our highest praise and gratitude for her steadfast loyalty, dedication and excellence in her role as practice manager. Fortunately, Mandy won't be saying good-bye as she will continue to work on a casual basis to cover for reception staff who are on leave. We have only the best wishes for Mandy and her next stage in life.

We are pleased to welcome Tracy Clarke as our new practice manager, commencing in July. Tracy is a very experienced and highly regarded practice manager who has successfully operated several large medical centres. She is well known to The Elms through previous interactions at the former Central Highlands Division of General Practice organisation, the regional practice managers network, and a local medical practice business group. Tracy lives locally so she will be well aware of the needs and expectations of our community. She will be receiving handover from Mandy over the coming months to ensure a smooth transition.

## **Reception news**

Another sad announcement is that Rosemary, who started here as a receptionist in 2012, is leaving. Rosemary has had to make the difficult decision to step down due to family commitments. We will miss her cheerful nature and her great ability to handle even the most challenging situation without becoming flustered. We wish Rosemary and her family all the best for the future.

The Elms has a long tradition of providing opportunities for trainees and we are happy to welcome Rhiannon as our new trainee receptionist. Rhiannon will be mentored by our existing staff under a formal program to develop the skills and experience needed to work independently as a medical receptionist. Rhiannon has previously worked as a fully qualified barista and has many years of providing customer service.

## **Podiatrist news**

With the demand for podiatry services continuing to grow, Medical Footcare Podiatry at The Elms welcomes a third podiatrist, Mr Andy Van. He joins Gerard Zammit and Zantana Hagos in providing valuable foot and nail care for patients, especially those with difficulty reaching their feet, have diabetes, or persistent foot issues. Andy will be working every second Friday and appointments can be made by phoning Medical Footcare Podiatry on (03) 9449-9393.

## **Ongoing Medicare support for telehealth**

The introduction of telehealth consultations at the start of the pandemic has demonstrated the previously untapped potential of this method of providing medical care. However, the Government has put certain limits in place regarding accessing telehealth. To be eligible for a Medicare rebate for telehealth, a patient must have a valid Medicare card and must also have attended the clinic for a face-to-face consultation within the last 12 months. Patients not fulfilling these requirements can still have a telehealth consultation but no Medicare rebate will be paid to the patient and a full private fee applies.

## **Closed circuit security cameras in the clinic**

Patients may already be aware that we have closed circuit cameras at the entrance and in the waiting areas of the clinic. These cameras have been in place for a number of years and they are there for the purposes of safety and security. The footage is stored electronically for a period of time before being over-written. There are no security cameras installed in consulting rooms or the treatment room.

## **What's old is new again**

Many current medical treatments have their origins dating back to ancient times. Concoctions derived from the bark or leaves of the willow tree were used to treat fever and pain well over 2000 years ago. The active substance in willow is a precursor to what we now know as aspirin. Another treatment documented over the millennia involved blood-letting, sometimes using leeches. The idea was that careful bleeding helped re-balance the internal functions of the body. We still perform blood-letting (nowadays called venesection) to treat conditions like iron overload (haemochromatosis) and excessive blood count (polycythaemia). Leeches continue to be used as part of modern plastic surgery to help prevent blood from collecting under delicate skin grafts, and to improve the blood flow in damaged tissues to promote healing.

There is pre-historic evidence of a procedure called trepanning, which involved the drilling of holes through the head, supposedly to release evil spirits. We know that many of those subjected to this ritual survived because their skulls showed signs of bone healing around the holes. A similar operation is used in current neurosurgical practice to release the pressure from bleeding around the brain after head trauma. There have been instances of doctors having to use a household electric drill in an emergency to achieve this!

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

