



wellnews



Volume 16 Number 1

The newsletter of
Wellness on Wellington

Autumn 2014

Conventional wisdom is that people are either cash-rich and time-poor or the other way around. But we are very aware that most people would like to save both time and money! This edition of Wellnews is dedicated to our efforts to help you in both departments.

To help you save time, we are introducing online bookings for patients who would prefer to make appointments without having to phone the clinic during our opening hours. We will also be running influenza -clinics to allow easy access to vaccination against the common winter flu.

To save you money, we discuss two recent reviews of the role of multi-vitamins and whether they actually do anything for long term health.

And most importantly, we want to save lives—so a couple of articles about the benefits that multi-disciplinary care has in management of chronic diseases and the introduction of a new weight loss program which we hope will make that new year resolution a little easier to keep.

Flu Clinics

Whilst we are currently in the midst of summer, all too soon “winter is coming”.*

Every year we encourage patients who are at high risk of complications to reduce their risk of catching flu by being vaccinated. The groups who are at highest risk are:

- Everyone over the age of 65
- Patients with diabetes
- Patients with asthma
- Patients with heart disease
- Patients with kidney problems
- Patients with other chronic illnesses or immunocompromised
- Pregnant women (the vaccine is perfectly safe in pregnancy, whilst flu is risky to mum and baby)

For the above groups, the vaccine is fully funded by the government.

The vaccine is also recommended for those who work with vulnerable people eg health workers and those who work in hospitals, nursing homes or other

aged
care
facilities.
Finally,
many

patients have the vaccine annually, just to protect themselves against the risk of illness because they want to avoid catching the flu and having to miss up to two weeks of work or family responsibilities.

Influenza vaccine can be given to anyone over the age of six months, though certain brands are not suitable for children under the age of 10, so please discuss this with your doctor if you wish to have your child immunised.

For patients who are not covered by the government program, we have this year been able to reduce the price of the vaccine to \$12.

For high risk groups, the vaccine is free. For others, the vaccine this year is only \$12

The recommended vaccine changes each year, based on the predicted strains, so patients do need to be reimmunised every year.

In recent years we have held special sessions at **Peppertree Hill and Waterford Valley** retirement villages to make it as simple as possible for their residents to be vaccinated. This year that session will be held on **Sunday 30th March**.

To make it easy for other patients to be immunised we are holding a number of extra sessions at the surgery this year. **The consultation will be bulk-billed and the vaccine will be free (if eligible) or \$12 (for other patients).**

If you would like to receive a vaccine, we suggest you book for one of the sessions set aside for vaccination. They will be held on:

Tuesday	18th March	9.00-12.30
Saturday	22nd March	1.30-4.30
Tuesday	25th March	5.30-9.00
Wednesday	26th March	2.00-5.30



At these sessions we will only be providing flu vaccination—other issues will require a separate appointment.

Patients over the age of 65 should also receive a pneumonia vaccination and those who are at high risk of complications—largely the same group listed above, should also receive a second pneumonia vaccination at age 70.

*Apologies to G.R.R. Martin.

**Wellness on Wellington
1101 Wellington Rd, Rowville
9780 8900 - all hours, every day.
www.wellonwell.com.au**

We are open every day of the year:

Monday - Friday 8.00 am - 9.00 pm
Saturday - Sunday 9.00 am - 5.00 pm
Public Holidays 9.00 am - 1.00 pm
(Christmas & New Year Day 10.00 am -12.00 noon)

For patients of this practice with urgent problems after hours, a doctor from the clinic can be contacted by calling the surgery and following the instructions on the answering machine.

**Save a life—
your own or your family's!**
Update your home phone, work phone,
mobile phone and address at reception!

Working together works

It's a well-known phrase in sport that "A champion team will beat a team of champions", and we think the same applies in health care. The great thing about Wellness on Wellington is the capacity for the many different health disciplines to work together closely as a team, sharing ideas and knowledge to improve health outcomes for patients.

Now there is a convincing proof that the method works, from the well respected Cochrane collaboration. (Cochrane is an international body of doctors who look at all the important studies on a particular topic, analyse the papers and rate them according to the quality of the research then develop recommendations based on their meta-analysis and literature review.)

Cochrane looked at the management of Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD—lung diseases like emphysema

and chronic bronchitis). They looked at 26 studies from 11 countries involving about 3000 patients. They concluded that "integrated disease management" - that is, collaboration between multiple health providers—resulted in less hospital admissions, increased exercise capacity and overall



better quality of life.

We haven't got hard evidence, but we think that the findings can be extended to most chronic (and many acute) health conditions—diabetes, arthritis, heart disease, depression, weight management (see below), coeliac disease and many others are best managed by your GP in combination with the nurses, pharmacists, dietitian, psychologists, exercise physiologists, physical therapists and many others who work at WoW.

Weight Loss—for Wellness, at Wellness

We all know the importance of maintaining a healthy weight and leading an active lifestyle. The challenge lies in achieving this elusive goal. Our fast paced lives often don't permit time to care for our own health and well-being until something forces us to stop and reassess.

We often see patients after they, or someone close to them, have had a health scare,

reassess their goals in life and become motivated to improve their health.

At Wellness on Wellington we are here to help you when your health is suffering, but we would prefer to help you prevent the onset of chronic disease in the first place. Diseases such as heart disease,

diabetes, blood pressure, osteoarthritis, low back pain, urinary disorders and many others, are known to be associated with being overweight or obese. By losing weight and engaging in physical activity, we know the risk of developing these diseases is reduced. Even for those

who already suffer from one or more of these chronic problems, the likelihood of them improving is good if you can alter your lifestyle for the better.

Many patients ask us for advice on changing their lifestyle and losing weight. As a result we have decided to offer a more formalized weight management

program utilizing the skills of our doctors, nursing staff, dietitian, exercise physiologist and other allied health providers. Our aim is to individualize a program that meets the needs of patients who are struggling with their weight and provide them with the tools to make positive changes to improve their overall health. So make it a New Year's resolution to slow down a little, look at where your health is headed and talk to your doctor today about how we can help you reduce your weight and increase your wellness.

Australia Healthy Weight Week:
17th-23rd February.



Online bookings

Wellness on Wellington is open every day of the year and for extended hours—but even our dedicated receptionists need to go home sometime! And we know that sometimes patients want to make appointments at the time that suits them, which may be after we are closed, or during the phone-crazy first couple of hours each morning (which is why we ask you to phone for results after 11am!) when unfortunately you may be put on hold for longer than you would like.

To try and make things more convenient for you, we have been looking for a reliable online appointment system that integrates well with our software. We are delighted to announce that we are now gradually rolling out an online appointment system for those patients who would like to use it. (Patients who prefer the personal contact of ringing and speak-

To make an online appointment simply go to our website, to docappointments.com.au or use the mobile app

ing to our ever-helpful reception team are of course welcome to keep doing so.)

Online appointments are only available to established patients of the clinic, and only for a single, simple appointment. (To book a double appointment, procedures, or make appointments for new patients, you will, at this stage, still have to call.) Each doctor has a unique code which you will need to request from reception—though you can ask for multiple codes if you are happy to see several doctors.

To make an online appointment you simply go to www.docappointments.com.au (either directly or via the link on our website) to register with the system, log in and make an appointment in one of the times set aside for online bookings. (If those times don't suit you, you will have to call.) You can even cancel your appointment the same way.

To make matters even easier, there is a mobile app available at the i-Store and Android store, allowing you to make online appointments whilst on the run.

We would be most grateful for your feedback—positive or negative—about the system as we gradually increase its scope. Please ask reception for the code for your preferred doctor.

From the medical press

Each issue we bring you a few interesting developments in the world of medicine with references so you can read more.

Australia's psychiatry college now backs using repetitive transcranial magnetic stimulation for treatment of depression, especially when not responding to other treatments.

ranzcp.org/Resources/Statements-Guidelines/Position-Statements.aspx
Scroll to #79

The Mayo clinic and other health organisations in the USA are experimenting with giving patients complete, immediate access to their medical record, usually through an on-line portal, offering both the risks and benefits of information.

nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMp1310132

New York is to restrict sale of tobacco products to people over the age of 21 from May this year. Evidence from Massachusetts suggests this can reduce smoking rates in high-school students three times as quickly as other methods.

nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMp1314626

Want to waste some money?

We all want to live long and healthy lives, and many people seek whatever help they can to achieve those aims. One of the common hopes is to try taking various vitamins, minerals or supplements to strengthen the immune system, ward off infection, prevent the onset of chronic disease or simply provide more energy.

At first blush it seems a bit odd that our physiology should be so deficient that we need to take pills to reach optimum health. One would think that our bodies would be tailored specifically to getting all we need from the environment in which we live.

Not so, runs the counter-view. Our diet is far removed from natural food sources, we no longer exercise as intended and in any event we live much longer and expect so much more from our bodies and minds. Our evolved circumstances have led to unnatural problems created by our ingenuity. In turn these problems need unnatural solutions.

Proponents of vitamin supplements have long argued that it is modern lifestyle that results in deficiency of micronutrients and that boosting our intake with capsules will fend off the ravages that face us. Many patients claim to feel much better after taking supplements—but is that a genuine effect or just placebo?

And the holy-grail question—do supplements prevent cancer, heart disease and other causes of premature death?

In recent months, two major review studies have been published looking at the impact of supplements.

The Lancet (one of the Big 4 medical journals) looked at over 360 studies on the role of Vitamin D. Some studies looked at patients' level of vitamin D and watched what happened to them

over time. Others gave vitamin D supplements to patients to see if it made a difference to patient outcomes.

The two groups of studies came up with quite different conclusions.

The “check the level and see what happens” studies reported in most cases that patients who started with higher levels of vitamin D (ie not from supplements—just their natural levels) had

overall lower cholesterol, less inflammation, less weight gain, better sugar metabolism, less infections, multiple sclerosis, depression, cognitive decline with age and less death. An impressive sounding result which suggests that lower levels of vitamin D are a problem which could be helped by giving vitamin D supplements.

Yet the intervention studies, where patients with low vitamin D were given supplements did not show any improvement in outcomes except in the small group of elderly patients (mostly women) who had very low levels of vitamin D. In that group, supplements were associated with a slight reduction in death rates.

The difference between the observational studies and the intervention studies, suggests that low vitamin D is not the cause of multiple health problems but more likely to be the result. Whatever causes the diseases that patients suffer, also results in low vitamin D. But reversing the latter, doesn't prevent the former.

The second study, published in Annals of Internal Medicine (a very respectable journal) reviewed 12,766 article summaries and from these chose 26 high-

quality studies to analyse, looking at the effect of all vitamin supplements on cancer and on heart disease.

They authors concluded that men who take a multivitamin pill for more than 10 years had a 7% decreased risk of cancer (a relatively small benefit). There was no benefit for women regarding cancer and no benefit for men or women in reducing heart disease.

Multivitamins provide no protection against heart disease and a small benefit against cancer only in men

selenium, calcium, iron, zinc, magnesium and beta-carotene. They analysed both single ingredients and “multivitamins” which they defined as anything containing three or more of the supplements.

In fact the most conclusive result of the study was that beta-carotene supplements increase the risk of lung cancer in patients who smoke.

What can we understand from these studies? Whilst they don't categorically prove that supplements are a waste of money, they do show that there is no strong argument for them and that the burden of proof rests on those who promote them to show that they are of value.

It's important to remember that these studies were looking at people who did not have a preexisting nutritional deficiency. Also it is well established that women who are pregnant (in fact starting three months before they fall pregnant) should be taking folic acid and in most cases iodine supplements.

The best protection against cancer, heart disease and other illnesses isn't to be found in a bottle of medication or of supplements but in a healthy diet, regular exercise, good sleep and healthy living!



Wellness Whispers

WELCOME BACK

We are delighted that **Dr Catherine Baccus** has returned from maternity leave. Baby Grace is now 4 months old (born 10.08.2013 at a healthy 3.1 Kg) allowing Cath to return to work each Monday and Friday evening with plans to extend her hours further into 2014. Dr Bacus will also be available for appointments on alternate weekends.

We also welcome back **Dr Sue-Lyn Chan** who was our very popular registrar in 2012. Sue-Lyn has completed her registrar training at a number of practices and will be returning to Wellness on Wellington for three months prior to her wedding and move to Canada.

NEW STAFF

The new year brings new registrars, and we must farewell **Dr Jennifer Neal** and **Dr Danielle Linden**. In their place we will be joined by **Dr Sara Tarafi** who will be with us part time for the next year and **Dr Kateena Vogel** who joins us for the first half of the year.

Sara tells us about her background. "After completing a Biomedical Science degree at Monash University I decided medicine was my calling. I went on to complete my medical degree at the University of Melbourne in 2009 and have worked within the Southern Health network of hospitals in various fields. Having realised I love all aspects of medicine I decided General Practice was the right place for me. In amongst all of this I have had 2 children and enjoy many activities in my spare time such as various fitness events, beach running and staying social."

Kateena says "I am Melbourne born and bred, and after completing my medical degree in Brisbane and working in Queensland and New South Wales, I am very excited to be back home.

The decision to start my GP training was an easy one for me - I am fascinated by all parts of medicine, and when I caught myself frequently stopping to see old patients that were back in hospital to see how they were doing, I realised how much I enjoy looking after people for the longer term.

"I recently completed my Diploma of Child Health, and although this is a special interest of mine, I also enjoy preventative health, and look forward to working with patients to improve their health at all stages of their life.

"In my spare time I enjoy cooking, reading, and am attempting to relearn the piano after many years."

NEW SPECIALISTS

We are also very excited to announce that **Mr Chris Kimber** will commence consulting at the

clinic on a fortnightly basis. Chris is one of Australia's leading paediatric surgeons and is head of paediatric surgery at Monash Medical Centre and state Clinical Lead for the

Victorian Department of Health. He has worked extensively throughout both the developed and third world and has particular expertise in urology (kidney diseases) and general paediatric surgery. He also performed world-first surgery on a 22-week old fetus whose limbs were being strangled by bands from the sac that surrounds the baby. Surgery on an unborn child is exceedingly difficult but Chris obtained excellent results. We are honoured to have a consultant of his standing joining us.

ONE MORE THING

That Wellness on Wellington provides training to registrars in the GP training program and to school leavers interested in a career in medical reception and administration is well known. But we encourage all our staff to continue to develop their skills through additional courses and degrees. **Natalie Perez-Reigosa** joined our practice as a division 2 (enrolled nurse) but is now more than half-way through training to complete her division 1 (registered nurse) training. We are very proud of her determination and persistence to upgrade her nursing skills and knowledge.

We encourage all our staff to continue to develop their skills through additional courses and degrees
