



wellnews



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The newsletter of
Wellness on Wellington

Autumn 2019

One of the traits we feel characterises Wellness on Wellington is that we are always looking for ways to make health care more convenient and available but also always of a higher standard. Innovations such as online bookings, script and referral requests show our commitment to the former, whilst being rated as one of the top five practices in the country by AGPAL, who accredit the standards of practices, shows our success in the latter.

With this in mind, we are delighted to let you know about three innovations within the practice.

The first is that we will be trialling telehealth consultations. We recognise that not all issues require a face to face consultation and that it may be possible to deal with some matters by phone or videolink. Read our article on page 2 of the newsletter regarding what matters might be suitable for these consultations.

We are also introducing two GP led, specialised clinics dealing with skin cancer checks, and lifestyle issues that can be treated with low carb diets. Finally, we will be running a patient information session on the joys and challenges of parenting, which we hope will lead to other information nights and topics.

Parenting — the biggest step there is

Becoming a parent changes your life – forever!

A new baby is often accompanied by new, and sometimes unexpected emotions. We imagine lots of cuddles, excitement, joy, and anticipation, but things are not always easy. It is also common to also feel isolated from your life “before baby”, and to be overwhelmed, stressed or anxious.

Although these feelings are also normal, they may be confusing, or even a source of shame or guilt. In Australia, postnatal depression and anxiety are increasing. One in five women are affected, and fathers can also be challenged at this time. Many

do not seek help.

The doctors at Wellness on Wellington are no strangers to parenthood. Many of us have young children and can remember all too well the upheaval that a newborn brings – both the good and the bad. Having experienced the joys and difficulties

We imagine lots of joy but things are not always easy.

of starting a family we would like to offer support to new parents in this most challenging time.

We have prepared a series of talks for new parents and those expecting a baby. We will start working through the issues you will face, and how to ad-

dress them. We hope that by sharing our personal and professional experience we can help you through this very rewarding but challenging time of life.

During these sessions we would also like to check for early symptoms of depression or anxiety. If these symptoms are caught early, we can make a difference to you and your family.

We will be holding 2 sessions for new parents or parents to be at the clinic. The first is planned for Wednesday 6th March at 12.30pm and the second session is scheduled for May 2019 (date to be confirmed). The sessions are fully covered by Medicare. If you or someone you know, even if they are not a patient of our practice, think these sessions may be of benefit, please contact reception.



**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!

Please also update the contact details for your Emergency Contact.

Skin cancer—check it out

Many of us remember we have skin only in the summer months when we can shed some layers and perhaps escape the Melbourne winter for a while. It is almost inevitable that during the hot summer months, we will experience the odd sunburn, even if we're careful.

The constant public health campaigns about the dangers of sunburn or even regular sun exposure and the risk of melanoma and other skin cancers means that more and more patients are asking for skin checks and advice about how to both prevent skin cancer and to find and treat it as quickly as possible if it arises.

All of our doctors are interested in assessing patients for skin cancer and you can ask for a check up with any of them. In general we would recommend that you book an appointment specifically for this—the danger of tagging on a “can you just check this mole” at the end of a consultation about something else is that we won't have time to properly assess the mole with the right light or equipment.

Although all our doctors are capable of skin cancer checks, **Dr Kirrily Ellerton** has done extensive additional training in skin cancer medicine. She has completed Certificates in Primary Skin Cancer Medicine, Advanced Dermoscopy and Histopathology.

Kirrily is now running a dedicated skin cancer checkup clinic on Tuesdays. These extended length appointments are only to discuss skin cancer and will involve taking a history of your sun exposure, a top-to-toe skin examination and often a biopsy of any suspicious lesions. If a full excision is required, then arrangements for formal followup will be made.

Although skin cancer is more common in patients as they get older, we have seen patients even in their twenties with skin cancers including melanomas. All skin changes are best assessed and treated as soon as possible. We strongly recommend you arrange for a skin check either with your regular GP or in the skin cancer checkup clinic regularly.

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Telehealth—a modern approach to old fashioned care

Our patients have enthusiastically adopted technology, not just in their general lives but in how they interact with us.

A significant number of our appointments are now made by patients online, either through our app or from the link on the website. (If you aren't sure how to access either of these, please speak to the reception staff who will be happy to show you how to do so.)

We've also had a very positive response to our recent introduction of online requests for scripts and for repeat specialist referrals. We've been very pleased

that in most cases patients have understood and accepted that not all requests are suitable to be agreed to without a formal consultation, but for those which are, online requests have been

very convenient and accessible.

We have therefore thought long and hard about taking the next step which is to introduce telehealth consultations. Telehealth isn't really new to the practice. As we have provided an oncall service to our regular patients since the practice first opened more than thirty years ago, we are used to providing triage services and telephone advice at all hours.

The logical extension is to provide formal consultations, either by telephone or video link.

Of course, many issues are not suitable for telehealth consultations. Obviously anything that requires a physical exami-

nation can't be properly assessed without the patient and doctor being in the same room.

Surprisingly, even some mental health consultations are best dealt with face to face. The depth of human interactions between doctor and patient are often best managed by a personal visit. It's hard to judge body language and even sometimes the significance of silence over a video call.

So what sorts of things are suitable for a televisit? Examples of suitable issues include receiving test results that need a simple rather than in depth explanation; writing referral letters that need additional background information but not a full assessment; advice about navigating the health care system; reviewing a patient a few days after an acute illness (assuming they don't need to be re-examined) and so on.

To book a telehealth appointment you will need initially to phone reception to arrange an appointment time and provide your contact details—either phone number or Skype connection details.

Not all the doctors will be participating in the early stages of this trial and therefore you will need to ask if your doctor is prepared to do so.

When your doctor is ready to commence your appointment they will contact you by your preferred method. Of course, just like a face-to-face consultation, they may be running late, so your call may come later than initially planned.

Obviously those who are keen on telehealth are likely to be keen to use technology more broadly and therefore if the demand for these consultations is significant, we will endeavour to arrange an online booking system for these as well. Our current system doesn't allow for the additional information we require to arrange a telehealth visit.

One aspect that we need to raise is that Medicare does not recognise telehealth

Suitable issues include receiving test results, writing referrals, general advice or reviewing acute illnesses a few days later

as being a medical consultation. Whilst there has been talk for many years about introducing a telehealth

item number (and one is available in certain circumstances for patients living in remote areas), currently there is no way for patients to access a Medicare rebate for consultations that are not face-to-face.

This means that whilst our normal fees will apply to these visits, the full cost of the consultation will be borne by the patient, with no rebate or refund available. Obviously bulk-billing isn't possible either in this situation

We know this is a huge financial disincentive for most patients to take advantage of the convenience of telehealth. We must leave the decision about the value of doing so in your hands. But if you feel that the time saving and convenience of a telehealth visit is worthwhile, then we are happy to assist, as part of our quest to keep making good health care easier to access.



From the Medical Press

Most older people who need Vitamin D will do better by good diet, exercise and sunshine, than by taking Vitamin D tablets. And if you take tablets, usually a low dose is enough.

<https://academic.oup.com/ajcn/article/109/1/207/5280801>

HIV prevention using PrEP (treatment used before infection) is pretty effective - but there are now emerging cases of breakthrough infection caused by resistance.

[https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanhiv/article/PIIS2352-3018\(18\)30288-1/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanhiv/article/PIIS2352-3018(18)30288-1/fulltext)

Two studies show probiotics in kids don't help reduce diarrhoea during gastro.

<https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMoa1802598>

For patients without established heart disease there are now three major trials saying the risks of aspirin to prevent heart attacks outweigh the benefits. This does not apply to patients with established heart disease. This is complex stuff. Ask your GP!

<https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/article-abstract/2721178>

Recalls and Reminders

We often contact patients to remind them to follow-up on results, tests or matters that have arisen during a consultation. Sometimes we send just a single letter; other times we will pursue patients until they finally figure it's easier to come in than keep getting chased by our diligent staff. What is the reason for this?

Technically there are two quite different types of procedures that we follow.

A reminder is a letter, SMS or phone call that we send as a courtesy to a patient. Examples include a reminder that the pap smear you had five years ago (which was perfectly normal) now needs to be repeated, just because it is due. Another example might be that your second Hepatitis A injection is now due, six months after the first one and we are reminding you in case you have forgotten.

For reminders, we may just send a single SMS or letter. Our aim is just to jog your memory, but it is up to you to decide whether the issue matters enough to you to come in and have it attended to.

On the other hand, a recall is a letter that we send in order to follow-up on a matter that is medically significant. An example is that you have an abnormal test result and we want to be sure that you will come in to have it followed up. Another example is the need to review a patient who had seriously high blood

pressure and we need to see if it is responding properly to treatment that we started.

In these cases—and depending on the severity—we might make several calls, send a couple of letters or SMSs and in the most life-threatening matters even come and knock on your door.

We will be gradually moving to SMS recalls as our default option

We have a particularly robust recall system at Wellness on Wellington—in fact it is so thorough that practices that have heard about our system (through registrars that used to work here and have now rotated to

other clinics) are contacting us to ask us how to set up their own system in imitation of ours.

The importance of being able to contact a patient with a recall or reminder—which sometimes are entered for as long as 10 years in advance—is why we are always asking you to keep your address and phone numbers up to date. Have you confirmed your details with reception?

Finally, we introduced the option of reminder SMSs rather than letters a few years ago and most patients seem to prefer these. Over the next year or so we will be gradually moving to SMS recalls as our default option except for those patients who specifically request that reminders be sent in the mail. If that applies to you, please ask your doctor and the reception team to annotate your file.

Lifestyle medicine

Whilst Western medicine has brought about enormous benefits and advances to health care, it's certainly true that the most important factors in determining our health are our genes and the lifestyle that we live.

We can't do anything about the parents we are born to, but we can all consider carefully whether we are looking after ourselves in the vital areas of diet, exercise, sleep, relaxation, purpose and social connection.

The field of healthcare that deals with these issues is an evolving speciality which is now called lifestyle medicine.

Whilst all our doctors have an interest in discussing diet, exercise and other lifestyle factors, **Dr Jo Pol-lott** has undertaken considerable study on the role of diet in preventing and treating many chronic diseases and on lifestyle medicine in general.

She has a particular interest in low-carbohydrate diets in improving metabolic health and has put together a program to help manage chronic diseases such as Type 2 diabetes and pre-diabetes, hypertension, polycystic ovarian syndrome and fatty liver disease, and to help with weight management. Her

aim is to empower patients to make lifestyle changes to become healthier and reduce medication where possible.

Jo will now be running a low carb lifestyle medicine clinic at Wellness on Wellington, currently on Tuesdays. These appointments are specifically to discuss lifestyle medicine issues, so more acute issues should be addressed during separate visits.

The vital areas of lifestyle are diet, exercise, sleep, relaxation, purpose and social connection.

Although these appointments are longer (usually 20-30 minutes), there is an enormous amount of assessment required and information provided during these consultations.

Please note that these consultations are always privately billed, though at a discounted rate for pensioners and health care card holders.

If you think that you may benefit from attending the low carb lifestyle medicine clinic, please speak to your GP or reception. It is often useful for blood tests to be done before your first appointment with Jo to help delineate the issues that need to be addressed.

Wellness Whispers

COMINGS AND GOINGS

The medical year generally runs from the beginning of February, so at the end of January we sadly farewelled **Dr Rif Syeda**, who was our registrar in late 2018. We wish her well with her future training and hope to see her in the future.

However we are very excited to announce that several of our recent registrars will be joining our team permanently. Our other 2018 registrar, **Dr Isaac Baker**, having completed his training, will be continuing on at Wellness on Wellington and we are delighted that he will continue to provide the excellent care here for which he has already become known.

We are also happy to announce that **Dr Peter Yee**, who was our registrar at the beginning of 2018 is returning to the clinic on a long term basis from the end of February. Peter will initially be consulting a few days a week with the expectation that he will be working here full time within a few months.

We are also delighted to announce that **Dr Lona Brown** and **Dr Anna Collins** will be returning from maternity leave in the near future. We anticipate Lona will be back on March 6th and working Tuesdays and Thursdays, whilst Anna will be returning on April 1st and will be working on Mondays and Thursdays.

Our new registrar for the first half of 2019 is **Dr Madeline McLaren**. Madeline graduated medicine from the University of Queensland in 2012. After starting her career in Brisbane, she ventured abroad to London where she worked in a busy Emergency Department for 18 months. Since returning to Australia, Madeline (who prefers to be called Maddy) worked in a variety of medical specialties at hospitals throughout Melbourne before starting General Practice training in 2018. She has a keen interest in all aspects of medicine and a passion for community healthcare. Maddy enjoys cooking (and eating!) in her spare time, and loves to go on outdoor adventures with her partner and her adorable puppy, Billie.

Normally summer is our quietest time of the year, so a number of our doctors took holidays at that time. However the demand for medical services was higher than we expected over the New Year period and we know that some patients found it difficult to make appointments at a convenient

time. We expect that the increased number of doctors we have will alleviate that problem so that we can provide timely care for all patients seeking appointments.

Finally, we would like to welcome our new receptionist trainee, **Tayelle Johnson**, who recently graduated last November from Vermont Secondary College. She has taken her first job here at Wellness on Wellington as a trainee and has impressed us with her enthusiasm. "I want to be able to help people even if it's in the smallest way. Being part of the receptionist team allows me to greet and farewell patients and answer their questions with a smile! Something as simple as that can make someone's day a brighter day. I hope to learn about being part of admin as much as possible.

We know it's been difficult sometimes to make appointments. Our increased number of doctors will alleviate that problem.

"I love being creative and have a passion in the arts. Anything that allows me to sing and dance makes me feel at ease. In my free time I enjoy playing with my pup and experimenting with makeup. I look forward to learning from one of the best medical practices in Australia."

NEW SERVICES

Mr Cameron Newitt is well known to many of our patients for the excellence he provided as a massage therapist. He has however also been studying chiropractic for the past five years and spent some time doing clinical attachments with Frank Whelan who has been chiropractor at Wellness on Wellington for the past eight years. Frank has now moved to another clinic and Cameron will be providing chiropractic services at Wellness on Wellington. We look forward to him offering the same quality of care in chiro that he previously showed in massage therapy.

NEW BABIES

Congratulations to our new fathers! **Dr Harishan Tharmarajah** and wife Majuri recently welcomed baby Kannan, brother to Aryan. And **Dr Peter Yee**, who returns to us in February, will be bringing baby photos with him. Baby Annabel who was born in late January and mother Mia are both doing well.

The information in this newsletter is general in nature and cannot be relied upon in any particular case. Serious conditions may appear minor and vice-versa. We therefore advise that if you have any concern about your health, you should consult your doctor at the earliest opportunity.