

### Prescriptions & Referrals

Repeat prescriptions and specialist re-referrals will not normally be issued without doctor - patient contact. There are many medications which require routine follow-up to ensure they are safely and correctly being taken. Examples may include contraception, hormone therapy, blood pressure and heart medication. **Where it has been agreed that such repeats will be issued, 24 hours notice is required and a fee of \$10 for each prescription will be charged.** Please be mindful that requests for repeat medications are not seen by the doctor until the end of the working day (on some days that may be after 8pm at night!!).

A simple re-referral, for example to a visiting specialist that the patient has been seeing for many years through the hospital system will be charged at \$10 if no consultation is done. **A new referral to perhaps a private specialist interstate or elsewhere will attract a \$20 fee as it takes more time to do.** These charges reflect the extra administration time and the actual doctor time spent then creating that referral and faxing it to the appropriate parties.

### Feedback

Our practice endeavours to provide a comprehensive high quality service for patients. At times we may invite you to complete a questionnaire to identify areas in which we may improve services. We value positive as well as negative feedback to help us improve our service to you.

Currently we have our feedback box sitting at the front reception counter, when you pay your account. Please consider filling in the very short form if you have any issues or queries about our service.

We have received four complaints since we have opened our doors. Unfortunately a number of them have gone straight to the Complaints Commission without discussing it first with the Practice Manager or Practice Principal of ASFMC. This frustrates both us and possibly those complaining??

**SICKNESS CERTIFICATES** will not be issued unless a doctor has been consulted in relation to that illness, and cannot be back dated. Over the last three months the number of requests for replacement of "lost sick certificates" or extending the time off work has dramatically risen.

**Due to the time it takes that doctor to revisit the file and reprint or adjust the certificate we have decided to add a charge for this service to both cover time and stationary costs. This will be \$10 which is not covered by medicare.**

Reception staff put those requests into the doctor's message book, and it is not routinely looked at until the end of the day. Depending on other requests, referrals or patient follow-up that is also required, reissuing or adjusting medical certificates is not a priority.

**Therefore please remember to ask during your consult with the doctor if you feel a medical certificate may be required.**

**We are involved in the NPCC third wave initiative which focuses on better patient access, Diabetes and Coronary Heart Disease management**



### ALICE SPRINGS FAMILY MEDICAL CENTRE

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### ALICE SPRINGS FAMILY MEDICAL CENTRE

## NEWSLETTER 1/07

Well, time has flown since we opened our doors for the very first time last year on 13/09/06. It has certainly been a very busy time for us.

Owners Susie Leister and Dr Deb Mitchell would like to thank patients for their patience as ASFMC has grown over these last few months.

We would like to welcome our two new reception staff Jodie and Meri to the ranks.

This newsletter is an opportunity for us to both inform and educate our patients about some upcoming changes to practice policy and opportunities for the future.



**Please respect the no smoking policy on the entire grounds of the clinic.**

Proud to be working with the community to improve Central Australian Health

**17 Stuart Highway  
Entrance off Kekwick Ave  
Parking at rear  
Phone 08 8952 7774 ALL HOURS**

## 717 HEALTH ASSESSMENTS

This is a new medicare item that came into existence on 1st November 2006. It is available for patients aged between 45—49 years of age who are at risk of developing a chronic disease. This health check is run by both the GP and our practice nurse at ASFMC. It involves reviewing your risks for various chronic medical conditions, doing a full lifestyle review, a complete physical examination and includes a screening ECG, and possible lung function tests (spirometry) and hearing tests (audiometry) if deemed necessary. It is an opportunity to discuss a number of health issues that may otherwise not be covered in a standard 15 minute appointment with a GP.

Since it's availability in November ASFMC has done close to 30 of these health assessments, discovering a number of chronic conditions that may have otherwise been missed. We are looking at involving local businesses in contributing to our "goodie bag" that the patient leaves with after that 717 check. If you know of such a business, or own one yourself that would be willing to contribute a small token towards better health education please let our practice manager know.

### Mini—FLU CLINIC ON Thursday 19th April

Looking at our current patient demographics for ASFMC we invited 120 patients in the last week of March 2007 by sending them a personalised letter to take up the offer of the influenza and/or pneumococcal vaccine with a specialised clinic being run on a Thursday afternoon. Initial responses were pleasing, but perhaps with typical "Territory Time" or delay in offering the service (as others had received vaccines at different clinics in town) we ended up seeing 25 patients for our first flu clinic. For those that were entitled to the subsidised vaccines there was no cost associated with this clinic; for those who were not eligible they only had to pay for the actual vaccine not the service.

Getting a 21% response to our initial invitation is something we will be keeping in mind when ordering the upcoming Gardasil vaccines for HPV protection. If you did receive an invitation for the flu-clinic and you have any feedback please don't hesitate to fill in one of our forms at the front counter.

## WE ARE NOT A BULK BILLING PRACTICE

### Missed Appointments

As a courtesy to the doctor, as well as to other patients, please be punctual for your appointment. Please note that should you miss your appointment **without 24 hours notice**, Alice Springs Family Medical Centre will charge a \$40 missed appointment fee. Please note that this fee is not reimbursable by Medicare. At times the doctor will run late due to emergencies or other patients taking longer with their standard appointments. Please be mindful that if you are 5—10 minutes late for your appointment and the doctor is running on time, you have just contributed to the delay the next patients will experience.

So far unpaid DNA fees total more than \$1500 which equates to more than 38 missed opportunities to see a GP. Those patients calling on the day to get an available appointment who have not been seen at this clinic before, are responsible for 85% of these missed appointments. There have been another 27 missed appointments that have had the DNA fee paid—however on the day they happen it still means others are missing out on the GP services.

If you have missed an appointment please be aware our computerised system flags you as owing us money, and you will not be given another appointment opportunity until that amount is paid.

We will also be sending out invoices for those patients who have been seen here before to remind them to pay their outstanding account with us. ASFMC is both a Medical Centre but also a small business trying to pay their overheads.

### CURRENT PATIENTS AT ASFMC TOTAL >2100

**This does not include visitors to town, relatives of patients or those stating that they used our service as they could not get into their usual GP.**

**Please be aware that at the moment our maximum capacity for appointments is 130 in a 5 day week.**

**Therefore DNAs impact greatly on the service we are trying to provide.**

## Human Papillomavirus (HPV)

This is the name for a group of viruses that can cause skin warts, genital warts and some cancers. Anyone who has ever had sexual contact could have HPV. It is so common that close to 90% of people will have had genital HPV infection at some time in their lives. There are certain types of HPV that can lead to cervical cell changes that may lead to cervical cancer.

There is a new vaccine called **GARDASIL** which is soon to become available to women aged between 12—26 years old. This vaccine can prevent infection with four HPV types. Two types cause 7 out of 10 cervical cancers. The other two types cause 9 out of 10 cases of genital warts.

There are planned school based immunisation programs for those girls aged between 12—18 years of age. Otherwise women aged 18—26 years of age, or those younger no longer attending school can get this **FREE VACCINE from their local GP.**

GARDASIL is given as a series of 3 injections into the upper arm muscle. It is usually given within a six month period:

Dose 1: at a chosen date

Dose 2: 1 –2 months after the first dose

Dose 3: 4—6 months after the first dose

The vaccine is most effective when all 3 doses have been given ie. The full course is complete.

Regular pap smears are still essential because the HPV vaccine does not prevent all cervical cancers. Pap smears detect abnormal changes to cells in the cervix so treatment can start before cancer develops.

ASFMC is planning on offering a "HPV vaccine Clinic" similar in style to our first "Mini-Flu Clinic" to women aged between 18—26 years of age. A letter will be distributed later in June to those eligible for the free vaccine better describing the options. The government subsidises the vaccine and the visit to get the injection will be covered by medicare rates ie. Bulk billed. STAY TUNED FOR FURTHER INFO