

CANNABIS—LINK TO PSYCHOSIS

Cannabis use (marijuana, weed, THC) increases the risk of disabling psychosis by about 40% according to the most recent meta-analysis published in the Lancet (a leading medical journal). A dose-response effect between intake of the drug and psychosis was evident in the study, with an increased risk of 50—200% in the most frequent users.

Given that around 20 % of young people use cannabis at least weekly, the drug can be expected to have substantial effect on psychotic disorders at a population health level. [The Lancet 2007; 370; 319-328]

Another study has found **smoking one cannabis joint causes the same amount of lung damage as up to 5 cigarettes**. Researchers found smoking cannabis was associated with a dose-related impairment in function in the large airways, resulting in airflow obstruction and hyperinflation.

PRACTICE NURSE— CHOLESTEROL RESULTS

Due to increasing demands on Susie's time, ASFCM management have decided to slightly alter the way results are given out. Due to a high number of patients having mildly elevated cholesterol results, it has become increasingly difficult for Susie to field all the enquiries. Dr. Mitchell is still very keen for mildly high results to be actioned, rather than to be told that everything is normal.

In the future (for cholesterol results) if the levels are outside the recommended guidelines set by the National Heart Foundation our reception staff will be able to let you know the total cholesterol level. They are not medically trained, so any further questions about the results will not be answered by them. We will have pre-prepared resources from the Heart Foundation, and other resources, that can either be e-mailed to you, or picked up at the clinic (at your leisure) which will include a copy of your cholesterol result. Depending on how far out of the normal reference range, the advice might be to repeat the blood test for cholesterol levels in 6 or 12 months time, and this will be automatically entered in our recall system.

If you feel you need further explanation, an appointment with the practice nurse or Dr Mitchell will be required.

www.heartfoundation.com.au or call Heartline on

1300 36 27 87

FEE CHANGE AS OF 1ST OCTOBER 2007

Due to increasing demand for longer appointments, we feel that the C (>20 minutes) consult charge needs to be adjusted slightly. The fee will increase from \$110, to \$115 from the 1st October 2007, meaning that the out of pocket expense is \$54.05. The standard appointment fee remains the same at \$60 for now. ASFCM provides an **after-hours service** for existing patients only and this is a fee paying service at \$160 depending on what service is provided. The rebates from medicare mean that patients get \$112.50 back for visits to the clinic after hours before 11pm at night. After 11pm at night the rebate only increases to \$132.55 but our fee is \$235. Please remember that Dr. Mitchell is the solo GP for now.

ACCREDITATION

We are about to undergo re-accreditation with AGPAL and also RACGP. Please be patient if this happens to fall on the days that you are at the clinic as it may impact on the doctor's running time.

As part of the accreditation process we require formal feedback forms to be filled out and kept on file. These are anonymous and are a way we can critique the service we are trying to provide. Please consider taking the time (< 5 minutes) to complete one of these forms if asked.

We value all feedback and sincerely are striving to continue to better the service we are providing at ASFCM.



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ALICE SPRINGS FAMILY MEDICAL CENTRE

NEWSLETTER 3/07

We have now been open for ONE YEAR—since the doors opened last September 2006. TIME CERTAINLY DOES FLY!!!

Spring is in the air—the garden (minus the area where the car ploughed through the fence) is doing fantastically well, and starting to attract the native birds.

Please feel free to sit and enjoy the surrounds if you have a moment.

Capacity should be back to normal now that Jodie and Meri are sharing reception duties again. For the next few months we will be closed every 4th Sat so that Susie and Dr Deb Mitchell can have some time away from the practice—to help preserve our sanity!

This newsletter is an opportunity for us to both inform and educate our patients about some

upcoming changes to practice policy and topics of interest.



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**

NOT TOO LATE FOR THE FLUVAX

With health authorities predicting Australia's flu season is yet to peak, experts state it is not too late to vaccinate at-risk patients.

The deaths of 5 young children in WA, Vic, and Qld and the death of a Qld man have been linked to the influenza A virus.

What are the symptoms of influenza??

- chills, shivering, and fever (temperature > 38C)
- headache
- muscle aches and pains
- sore throat
- stuffy or runny nose
- sneezing
- dry cough
- fatigue, tiredness
- trouble breathing

One of the most effective ways to protect you, your friends and family from the flu is to practise good personal hygiene.

1. Cover your nose and mouth when you sneeze or cough
2. Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20sec
3. Don't share personal items—towels, toothbrushes, eating utensils, cups etc
4. Clean surfaces—tables, fridge doors, sinks etc with detergent or soap and water
5. Avoid close contact with others—avoid going out in public when you are sick. Sometimes the best thing a GP can do is given you a medical certificate to stay home from work or school when sick.

Flu vaccination can be administered to anyone who wishes to reduce the likelihood of becoming ill with influenza. Annual vaccination is recommended for people who are at risk of flu-related complications, including all people > 65 years, or >50 years if Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (ATSI)

FLUVAX IS \$20 AT ASFMC

Pre-existing patients can see Susie, our practice nurse without seeing the GP. Cost for that visit would be \$20, plus the fluvax (\$20) with a medicare rebate of \$10.60.

Depending on where you work, the cost of the visit and vaccination could be a valid tax deduction—keep the receipt.

EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION (ECP)

ASFMC provides emergency contraception as an extra service. What does that mean?? If you have unprotected sex, either by choice or accident, there are medications that can be taken to **prevent pregnancy**.

This is not to be confused with regular contraceptive options. They can be taken 12 hours after sex, up to 72 hours (3 days). It is estimated that ECP will prevent 95% of expected pregnancies if taken within the first 24 hours, declining to 60% if taken between 48—72 hours. It can be used up to 5 days, but there is not evidence to back up this practice (more of a last resort). There are two options—postinor or the mini-pill. The difference is mostly cost, and ease of taking. Postinor is 2 tab taken at the same time (previously had to be 12 hours apart) and costs \$35 at ASFMC. The mini-pill microlut is 25 tab taken at a certain time, and then another 25 tab 12 hours later; total 50 tab, but only costs \$10. They are equally effective.

ECP will not prevent you from catching sexually transmitted diseases—safe sex includes use of condoms, and the sex being consensual. If you feel that you need this service, we can create a “fit-in” appointment with the practice nurse, and you are then seen by the GP. So even if there are no “available appointments” all you need to say is that you require “emergency contraception” and ASFMC will see you on the day.

IMPLANON

32 Australian women have had an unintended pregnancy following interaction between **Implanon** and hepatic enzyme-inducing medicines. The Australian Adverse Drug Reaction Bulletin said women receiving long term treatment with such drugs should have their implanon removed and another non-hormonal, contraceptive should be used. Medicines implicated in the pregnancies were carbamazepine, phenytoin, phenobarbitone (used in **epilepsy** management) and rifampicin, but ADRAC also warned of potential interactions with griseofulvin and St John's wort.

If you have implanon (3 yr progesterone hormone implant for contraception) and are on the above named drugs ASFMC would strongly recommend an appointment to discuss other contraceptive options.

SMOKING—THE FACTS

Every year about 19,000 Australians die from diseases caused by smoking. One in two lifetime smokers will die from their addiction. Half of these deaths will occur in middle age.

Tobacco smoke contains over 4000 chemicals. As well as tar and nicotine, there is also the gas carbon monoxide (found in car exhaust fumes), ammonia (found in floor cleaners) and arsenic (found in rat poison).

At least 69 of the chemicals in tobacco smoke are known to cause cancer. Cancers caused by tobacco include of the lung, mouth, throat, oesophagus, stomach, pancreas, kidneys, bladder, cervix and bone marrow.

Every cigarette you smoke temporarily increases your heart rate and blood pressure, and narrows the small blood vessels under your skin. It slows the blood flow, reducing oxygen to your feet and hands. Chemicals from smoke make your blood cells and blood vessel walls sticky, allowing dangerous fatty deposits to build up. Blocked blood vessels in your heart (heart attack) or brain (stroke) can disable or kill.

There is no such thing as weaker cigarettes—those labelled “smooth” or “refined” mean you inhale the same amount of “crap” so you do the same amount of damage.

Staff and management at ASFMC make no apologies when asking people to not smoke on our premises. We have signs everywhere, and considering we are a medical clinic, we feel advocating a preventative and healthy message is our right.

Some patients have taken offence when asked to put their cigarette out— perhaps the health messages of ASFMC are not the best medical clinic for them?? Remember we have reflective laminate on the windows of the practice—you cannot see in, but we can see out !!! Every week staff pick up cigarette butts, flicked in the garden, left in the carpark or on the paths leading to the clinic.

Quit-line

137848



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