

PENSIONER BILLING

Since July 2009 ASFMC management made the conscious decision to bulk bill aged pensioners to assist in some small way with the financial burden for our existing patients. A review of our aged pensioners and the total number of visits some individuals have had in a calendar year are amazing—best number 30 in 52 weeks (and we were closed over Xmas for 3 of those). We are going to trial a new system to stop the “frequent flying” perhaps unnecessary visits that some are having by reducing the number of funded medicare bulk billing visits. ASFMC Management has spent a long time reviewing the costs for our clinic and basically when we bulk bill someone we are financially worse off by \$30.95 compared to a fee paying visit. Multiply that by 20—30 visits and it certainly adds up. A fact sheet has been created that our reception staff will hand out next time you come into the clinic if this new policy applies to you to better explain the changes.

DIABETES AND AT RISK ASSESSMENTS

With Susie’s involvement as our practice nurse we are going to proactively invite all patients who are between 40—49 years of age and potentially at risk of diabetes to a funded one hour visit with her. It will involve updating a baseline ECG (screening tool for the heart), potentially extra blood tests, physical measurements and lifestyle and dietary information. Our aim is to prevent progression to type 2 diabetes in those at risk, and better educate our patient population without penalising them with charges for this visit. However if someone declined the preventative check, we would make note in their file, as ASFMC prides itself on the preventative strategies we provide.

NEWEST GOVT ANNOUNCEMENT ON MEDICARE PROPOSED CHANGES

As you are most likely aware, the Government announced considerable changes to its proposed \$7 co-payment model in December 2014. The RACGP is reassured the Government has listened to the RACGP and communities, with vulnerable patients now exempt from any out-of-pocket costs. However, it is inconceivable that general practice has been specifically targeted with a \$5 cut in the Medicare rebate for standard consultations for non-concession card holders despite it being universally recognised that a strong primary healthcare sector produces enhanced health outcomes and curbs health expenditure. Quality patient health outcomes should be at the centre of any Government discussion on health and the RACGP will continue to reiterate this position. The RACGP **does not support** any cut to Medicare rebates for general practice consultations. The RACGP remains committed to negotiating a positive outcome with the Government that best supports the delivery of quality general practice patient services. Despite the positive changes in relation to the protection of our communities most vulnerable, the revised model proposed by the Government in December’s announcement does not reflect a model supportive of a viable and sustainable general practice profession. The reduced rebate has significant implications for the financial viability of every general practice, in particular those operating under a small business mode. Evaluation and Care of Health (BEACH) report reveals less than 10% of all consultations are six minutes, with the average consultation lasting 15 minutes, the proposed change in the time based factor for short consults has merit and the RACGP will progress this initiative with Government. As a clinic we need to seriously think of shorter appts for aged pensioners. If we are to continue the altruistic policy of bulk billing aged pensioners this is the only option we can see to remain viable. We have had some patients self present more than 20 times in a calendar year which I am sure would be less if they were paying for some of these??



ALICE SPRINGS
FAMILY MEDICAL

NEWSLETTER

EDITION 31
FEB 2015

DOCTORS

Dr Deb Mitchell

GP Registrar Dr Ally Lu

PRACTICE NURSE

Susie Leister RN

ADMINISTRATIVE TEAM

Practice Manager—Susie Leister

Receptionists—Lynlee & Angela

PRACTICE HOURS

Monday to Friday 8:15am—5:30pm

Sat, Sun & Public Holiday's - closed



Accredited
General Practice

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

TEL: 08 8952 7774



WHAT'S NEW?

ASFMC hopes all patients and their families had a safe and Happy Xmas, New Year for 2015.

Currently we still only have Dr Mitchell as our solo GP with numerous locums helping out at certain times, and have a new GP registrar Dr Ally Lu joining us in February 2015. With one GP for >3000 active patients the inability to provide the expected services for that many patients means we are brainstorming how to better provide what services we do well. We will keep you abreast of any changes as they happen.

The new Medicare changes previously proposed were related to standard consults being longer than 10 minutes. This was to come into effect on the 19th January 2015 and was sneakily introduced without having to be approved by the Senate however was thankfully dropped last minute the week prior by the Health Minister.

By having to seriously think about our clinic as a small business due to all these threatened potential Medicare changes ASFMC Management has decided to trial a new system of billing for aged pensioners.

ASFMC Management is seriously trying to work out a viable "transition plan" to make for a better work-life balance for Dr Mitchell and Susie while still aiming to uphold the high level of care that we provide. 2015 will be the year that changes will start to be out in place so stay tuned.



www.healthyweightweek.com.au

16—22nd February 2015 is the week nominated for this. To the best of ASFMC Management's knowledge there will be a stall at the Alice Springs Hospital but nil other events have been posted on the website. As a nation, our waistlines are growing. Today, over 63% of Australian adults and one in four children are overweight or obese. Unhealthy eating and not enough physical activity can lead to overweight issues and obesity, and an increased risk of developing a chronic disease such as some cancers, heart disease and type 2 diabetes. What's your waist measurement?

Shape Up Australia is an initiative to help Australians reduce their waist measurements and improve their overall health and wellbeing. There are many everyday changes you can make to help you Shape Up and get on your way to a healthier lifestyle. Keep an eye out for the Shape Up Australia brand when looking for healthy lifestyle information, programs or services near you. All Shape Up Australia branded activities are evidence-based, meaning you can have confidence in the advice and support you receive.

www.shapeup.gov.au

DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THESE??

Falls Prevention - a programme to develop strength in your legs, improve balance & prevent falls.

Suitable for seniors and post hip/knee replacements

10am Tuesdays & Thursdays

Heartmoves - a safe and gentle exercise session to reduce your risk of heart disease.

Suitable for people with existing health and other chronic health conditions.

11am on Tuesdays & Thursdays

Youth Exercise Sessions - get fit, feel great!

Have fun with friends and improve your fitness, suitable for youth ages 12 - 18 years

3:30pm on Tuesdays & Thursdays

The cost to attend these programmes is a gold coin donation.



For more information, or to register your interest in attending any of these programmes, please contact **Healthy Communities Coordinator Lucinda Moody** on **89500 533** or lmoody@astc.nt.gov.au