

Wellness Whispers

BABY BOOM

An avalanche of babies is about to hit WoW as three of our doctors are going on maternity leave. We wish **Drs Kirrily Ellerton, Julia Trayer and Kristina Coniglio** all the best for their break and look forward to seeing them back, hopefully rested, in a few months time.

Congratulations to our dietitian **Tracey Eppel** who had a baby girl in late February. Deena is child number three and we wish the whole family good health and sound sleep. Tracey returns from maternity leave in August.

NEW STAFF

We are fortunate to be joined by **Dr Manjiri Nair**, an experienced GP who studied medicine and a diploma in ophthalmology in India, then completed her training in General Practice in London. "As a family we decided to move to Australia early last year. I have enjoyed the cultural events and culinary delights of Melbourne. I hope to build long-term satisfying relationships with the patients of Wellness on Wellington. I enjoy the variety of being a generalist and have special interest in womens health, peditrics, sexual health and ophthalmology. The highlight of my life at present is my 6 month old daughter Anika. I look forward to being a part of the Wellness on Wellington team."

We have also been joined by our new nurse, **Sahidan Krishna** who will be performing home visits for patients receiving the age 75+ assessments, as well as duties in the treatment room.

Sahidan tells us that "I am originally from Fiji and did my nursing training and worked for a number of years in New Zealand. We moved to Australia five years ago and I now live locally with my husband. I have 30 years experience in various fields of nursing including midwifery, public health, neonatal intensive care and general medical and surgical nursing.

I love travelling, music and play a bit of social tennis. I am enjoying working at Wellness on Wellington with this lovely bunch of dedicated people and hope I will be able to make a strong contribution to the good work they do."

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.

WEDDING NEWS

Congratulations to **Justin Tate**, our osteopath who after an engagement in December last year got married on Easter Saturday in a lovely ceremony in the gardens of Bramleigh Reception Centre in Croydon. On a beautiful autumn afternoon, their 11 month old son Hayden, looking cute in his black suit, walked down the aisle before his gorgeous mother, the bride Andrea. They will remember the day for the rest of their lives.



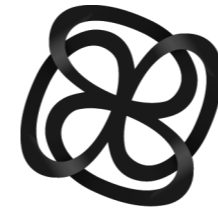
A FEW REMINDERS

We've often found that this is the best read page of our newsletter, so it's a good place to drop in reminders about a few things that we'd like to emphasise!

We are happy for patients to ring for their pathology results unless advised by the doctor that they must attend in person. Certain tests, such as testing for HIV/AIDS, must be given in person. For other tests, you may call for results but we do ask that you ring no earlier than 11am. Before that time, our reception staff are extremely busy with patients ringing for appointments, and there is also a good chance that even if the doctor is working, that they won't have had a chance to check the test results till late morning. Ringing after 11am will reduce the chance of frustration all round.

We'd also like to remind parents that we offer all pre-school immunisations at the surgery. We have noticed a decrease recently in parents whose children are fully immunised. If you have any questions about childhood vaccinations, please speak to your doctor or to any of nursing staff, all of whom have received full accreditation as immunisers.

If you have had an xray, ultrasound, CT scan or other radiology test in the past two years, please collect it from the practice and store it safely at home.



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Building works on our new practice site is progressing well. After an initial period of ground works which seemed to crawl along very slowly, the erection of concrete and steel has been a daily show. Once the walls are all up it may look like slow progress again as the internal works take place out of view. Currently all is on track and we expect to expand our practice to the new location by the end of the year. Our newsletter will fill you in on some more details of the design of the new building. Separate articles criticise doctors and alternative health practitioners for woolly thinking and misleading claims about smoking cessation and vitamins respectively. We introduce our new staff—doctors, nurses and audiologist—and fill you in on the latest in medical research which tells you whether that box of toys in the waiting room is safe for your children to play with!

Nothing is as good as it seems

Lots of alternative health practitioners, and some mainstream ones, will spruik the importance of taking vitamin supplements as an aid to good health. They argue that vitamins are natural, safe and necessary. They might however have to rethink their claims after a major study in Sweden showed that women who take a daily multi-vitamin pill are nearly 20 per cent more likely to develop breast cancer.

The study looked at over 35,000 women for a ten-year period. The researchers think that increased vitamins and minerals make the breast tissue denser and therefore more likely to turn cancerous. They also think the folic acid in the multivitamins may accelerate the growth of tumours. It is important not to be too shaken by such a report. We are not suggesting that multi-vitamins are a huge health hazard. Most studies need to be re-

peated before they can be confidently accepted, and this study had flaws.

But the study does show how naturopaths and others who claim that "drugs" are dangerous and "natural products"



are safe are ignoring the truth. Everything we consume - manmade or natural - is really just a chemical that affects the bodies biochemistry - the chemical reactions that make our body

work. Anything that affects one part of the system is surely going to affect others.

Most people in Australia - a land with a wonderful fresh food supply - do not need multivitamins. Those who do, like pregnant women or those who are truly malnourished, should continue to take them. For the rest of us, a health diet, a bit of sunshine and regular exercise is as natural and as healthy as we can be.

Medical abbreviations

A few issues ago we explained the common qualifications that our doctors hold, and what those long string of letters and abbreviations after their names mean. Here is a list of the less common ones which vary between our doctors.

DipRACOG, DRANZCOG, DRCOG and CSCT are all variations of the Diploma in Obstetrics that several of our doctors hold. This qualification shows additional training and experience in antenatal care and obstetric delivery, though none of our doctors deliver babies any more.

MPH is a Masters degree in Public Health indicating additional study and research into the health issues that affect the community as a whole rather than just individuals.

BSc is a bachelor of science that several of our doctors did prior to or in parallel with their medical degree.

Grad Dip Pall Care is a diploma in palliative care—the management of patients who are in the final stages of life.

Finally (**Hons**) means that the related degree was awarded with Honours which indicates outstanding academic performance. In general it is awarded to medical students who are ranked in the top 15% or so of their class. We recently realised that nearly all the female doctors in the practice achieved that standard for their medical degree — and none of the male doctors did!

Save a life—

your own or your family's!

Update your home phone, work phone, mobile phone and address at reception!

Wellness on Wellington
1/1100 Wellington Rd, Rowville
9755-5433 - all hours, every day.
www.wellonwell.com

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.

Brief bits

Flu news

We had a gratifying response from the residents of Peppertree Hill and Waterford Valley to our offer to run a special flu immunisation clinic in early April. We will make that an annual event for the convenience of those patients.

We also run flu clinics for some local companies. Many businesses offer flu shots to their staff as a way of reducing staff illness over winter and shutting down a whole office or factory if flu sweeps through the staff. If you work (or run a business) locally, please speak to our practice manager or nurses about arranging a staff flu clinic.

For everyone else, it's not too late to get a flu shot for this year's strains of flu including swine flu. However the sooner you get it the better.

We note that the Health Department is providing free vaccines for a broader range of patients this year, so anyone who is in a high risk group, including people with diabetes, heart disease, kidney disease, asthma or lung problems, pregnant women, everyone over the age of 65 and anyone with other chronic illnesses is eligible to receive a free shot.

For patients not eligible for a free vaccine, we note that the PBS is no longer subsidising vaccines. We can however offer private vaccines to those patients.

The price of following fashion

Tattoos and piercings are so common these days that we think them risk-free. However a report from England relates a woman's death from blood poisoning and pneumonia less than two days after having a steel bar put through her tongue.

In honour of her birthday, the 34 year-old fulfilled her long-time wish of having a piercing. The next day she developed a swollen tongue and her doctor prescribed antibiotics. However the following day she collapsed and despite hospital resuscita-

tion efforts died from overwhelming infection, less than 48 hours after the procedure.

There are plenty of risks with piercings apart from sudden death. Dentists are particularly worried about the risks to teeth from plastic (or even worse, metal) tongue studs which cause major damage to the enamel. And infectious disease specialists have seen an increase in infections of the heart valves since tongue piercings became more popular. This a serious condition which can lead to permanent heart damage and which needs up to six weeks of intravenous antibiotics to cure.

We urge our patients to think two or three times before undertaking any tattoos or piercings and to be very careful about the sterile procedures of the facility they attend.

Stroke and the youth of today

We think of stroke as being a disease of old people but there has been a significant increase in strokes in younger people. One American study showed that the percentage of people with a stroke who are aged 20 to 45 has increased from 4.5% to 7.3% over 10 years. This dropped the average age of first stroke from 71 to 68.

The cause may be due to the increase of three closely related problems: obesity, diabetes and high blood pressure. The effect of the three conditions may be wiping out the health gains that have come from reductions in smoking.

Younger people are more likely to survive a stroke, resulting in the need for decades of care. 25% of patients will end up in a nursing home; one-third will suffer depression.

High blood pressure is the biggest risk factor and increases the risk of stroke four times in people who are in their 50s, compared with two times for those in their 70s. Other risk factors include smoking, high cholesterol, physical inactivity, poor diet and some oral contraceptives.

Development news

Before we started designing our new practice we spent a lot of time looking at other surgeries around Melbourne, regional Victoria and even a few interstate.

It became obvious early on that the design requirement of larger clinics are quite different to those of smaller surgeries. In the end we visited over fifty clinics and have inspected almost every large practice in Melbourne.

Apart from asking the receptionists,

We inspected almost every large practice in Melbourne

managers, doctors and nurses at the clinics what they liked about their surgery, we spent a lot of time finding out what they didn't like or what they would do differently next time. We also just spent time hovering around each clinic watching how patients moved through the surgery and how common procedures were handled in the waiting room, reception area, doctors rooms, treatment room and back office.

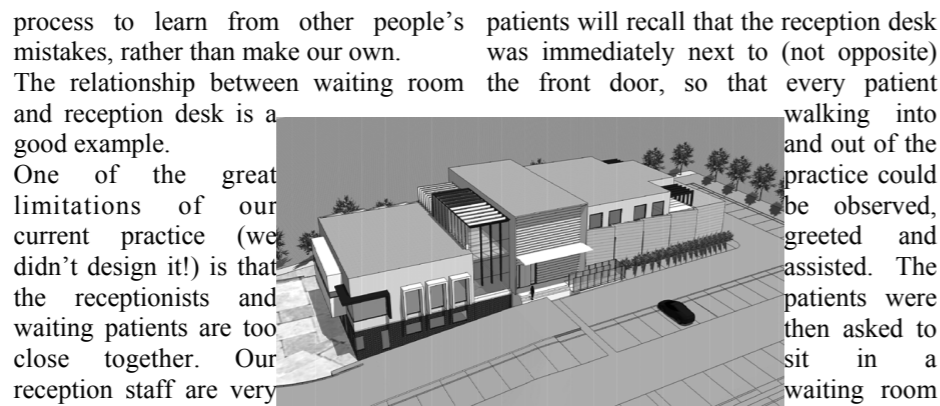
We invested so much effort in the design

process to learn from other people's mistakes, rather than make our own. The relationship between waiting room and reception desk is a good example.

One of the great limitations of our current practice (we didn't design it!) is that the receptionists and waiting patients are too close together. Our reception staff are very aware of this and the

implications for confidentiality, which is why they will usually not use your name over the phone when giving out results. If it seems that they are being unfriendly or impersonal, please understand that it is purely to safeguard your privacy. Another big problem is that patients sometimes enter or leave the practice without being noticed.

We looked at different arrangements at the practices we visited and ironically one of the best set ups we saw was our old Dandelion Drive practice. Long standing



patients will recall that the reception desk was immediately next to (not opposite) the front door, so that every patient walking into and out of the practice could be observed, greeted and assisted. The patients were then asked to sit in a waiting room that was under direct observation by the reception staff but far enough away to avoid waiting patients hearing front-desk conversations or phone calls. Our new building - though enormously bigger than our original home - returns to that wonderful original design. The setup separates receptionists from the waiting room while keeping the latter under direct vision which we think it is critical to good care. There is also a separate area for staff to make and take sensitive calls. We can't wait to move in!

Medical news

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

We love it when our patients want to stop smoking and are happy to do whatever we can to assist. Since smokers may have a habit, addiction or both, it is important to tailor the treatment to their individual needs. If you want our help, please book a half-hour appointment with your doctor to discuss the issues.

But we have to be honest. Doctors tend to focus only on what we can do, rather than on what you can do for yourself. A fascinating article by Dr Simon Chapman from the University of Sydney (plosmedicine.org/article/info%3Adoi%2F10.1371%2Fjournal.pmed.1000216) showed that up to **90% of people who quit do so without any drugs or even counselling**. For the other 10%, please call on us for help.

Have you ever been worried about your kids getting sick from the waiting room toy-box? Then you might be reassured by a study published in the *Pediatric Infectious Disease Journal* (journals.lww.com/pidj/Abstract/2010/02000/Respiratory_Viral_RNA_on_Toys_in_Pediatric_Office.3.aspx) which showed that **waiting room toys don't easily transmit viruses**. Researchers swabbed multiple items in a paediatrician's waiting room and found that about 20% of the objects were contaminated with respiratory viral RNA, the germs that cause most colds. Cleaning the toys with a disinfectant was only modestly effective in removing the germs, but transfer of picornaviral RNA from toys to fingers was "inefficient" meaning it wasn't easy to catch the infection from the toys.

Most of the **women who are more likely to get a fracture due to osteoporosis don't actually realise that they are at increased risk**. An international survey of over 60,000 women over the age of 55 found that about 50% of women who had one significant risk factor for osteoporosis thought they were at less risk than other women their age and another 35% actually thought they were at lower risk. The study (springerlink.com/content/j804016100671372/fulltext.pdf) even showed that women with multiple risk factors such as taking steroid medication, smoking, being significantly over or underweight etc did not realise that they were at increased risk of fractures. The lesson seems to be that doctors need to be clearer about explaining to women what the risk factors for osteoporosis are.

A new class of drugs has been developed which may **remove the need for regular blood tests by patients taking warfarin**. (australianprescriber.com/magazine/33/2/42/7/)

The new drugs rivaroxaban and dabigatran have been shown to be effective in preventing blood clots developing after knee and hip replacement surgery and they show promise for patients taking long-term anti-clotting medication to prevent heart attack, lung clots, DVTs and strokes. When used for less than four weeks no blood tests are needed making them much more acceptable, but their long-term role is still unclear.

Now hear this

A study in South Australia suggests that over 20% of adults have a significant level of hearing loss, whilst a US study says that 12% of American children have hearing loss caused by noise. Around one in five teenagers expose themselves regularly to high decibel noise (such as rock concerts) and about three quarters of the people who go to nightclubs and discos experience temporary ringing in the ears (tinnitus) which is a known symptom of hearing damage.

Hearing loss can cause loss of school or work opportunities due to impaired communication, social withdrawal and then emotional problems.

Testing for and treating hearing loss as early as possible is therefore an important factor in having a happy and productive life.

We are delighted that we have now added audiology to the services available at Wellness on Wellington. AddHEARING will be providing a consulting service on weekends led by highly experienced audiologist, Michelle Esparon. She tells us about her profession and how you may benefit.

If eyes are the windows to the soul, then ears are the doors to the mind. The ear captures sound and helps you recall that sound throughout your life. The ear helps the body respond emotionally, according to the sound heard, like emotions of love on hearing the sound of a loved one and emotions of fear on hearing a threat! From the sweet chirping of the birds to the irritating sounds of crickets, the loud bang of crackers and the beautiful symphony of an orchestra, all these

different sounds and many other sounds are possible to hear due to our ears.

Did you know that hearing loss is one of the most common conditions affecting older adults? When left untreated it can significantly impact your quality of life.

This is where an Audiologist can help. Michelle has a Masters degree in Clinical Audiology and is trained to diagnose and treat individuals with hearing impairments. AddHEARING aims to bring good hearing back into the lives of people with hearing loss so that they are better able to function more efficiently in their daily life activities.

Services provided include:

Full hearing assessments (for adults and children over the age of 4)

Fitting of Hearing Aids and other communication devices

Educating clients on the use of hearing aids

Rehabilitation to help adjust to hearing amplified sounds through the hearing aid.

Hearing preservation – fitting of ear moulds to protect the ears from loud noise, music and water

Medicare rebates are available on hearing tests and free hearing services are available for eligible adults under the Commonwealth Governments Hearing Services program which provides both testing and hearing aids.

If you feel you are experiencing difficulty hearing, speak to Michelle or your doctor.

