

STAFF NEWS

The Waikanae Health Centre Team

Doctors:

Dr Anna Gruchy arrived in Waikanae in July 2007 as a registrar, and when that concluded in December 2007 she stayed on as part of our clinical team. However, we are losing Anna at the end of January 2009 as her husband's work takes him to Christchurch. Anna has been a very popular doctor both with staff and patients, and although we are sorry to see her go we wish her a very happy time in the Mainland.

Dr Julie Forsey arrived from Scotland in July this year to locum for **Dr Andrew Edwards** while he is on sabbatical. Andrew returns at the end of January, and Julie will leave us at that point to pursue her life in the Hutt Valley with her family. We would like to thank Julie for taking such good care of Andrew's practice in his absence.

Dr Chris Niranjana has been working in our practice as a registrar since August, and we are very pleased that he has agreed to stay on now that his registrar training is concluded.

We will have a new registrar beginning in February 2009. **Dr Chris Hewison** will be working in our practice until mid June 2009 when he will leave to complete his second placement at a different practice.

Nurses:

We have had several changes in our nursing staff over the past few months. **Nurse Sara Willis** joined us to replace **Sarah Mitchell**, and **Nurse Angela Crespin** has replaced **Carmel Rodrigo** on the Prescription line and BP and wound clinics. Both these nurses bring extensive experience to our nursing team.

Several of our nurses are engaged in post graduate study in various nursing specialties, and a number of them are also now accredited through the College of Practice Nurses' Accreditation programme.

Admin:

Raelene Taylor joined the reception team in June this year. Raelene has worked for a number of years in a practice in Wellington, and we have benefited from her moving to live in Waikanae. **Cathy Davis** has also rejoined us at the front desk for a couple of days each week, and **Judy Button** is back with us helping out with relieving.

X-rays in Waikanae

Don't forget that if you need a plain X-ray you can have it done here in the Health Centre. We hear anecdotally from the radiographers that sometimes Waikanae folk turn up in Paraparaumu for their X-rays and appear surprised to hear

they could have had it done in Waikanae. Pacific Radiology runs an X-ray service from our Health Centre, usually every day.

Licence Renewal for Older Drivers

It is important that older people retain their independence, and driving is one factor that can facilitate this. Age by itself is not a barrier to holding a driver licence and many people of advanced years continue to drive safely. In fact crash statistics show that older drivers in New Zealand are involved in relatively few crashes – only 2% of drivers involved in serious crashes are aged 80 or over. However in terms of crashes per kilometre driven, they are second only to young drivers in terms of crash risk (likelihood of having a crash). Furthermore the consequences are often more severe due to greater frailty and longer recovery time.

Although chronological age is not an indicator of an individual's physical wellbeing, the natural ageing process is accompanied by a significant increase in factors that may impair safe driving:

- Early onset of fatigue
- Slowed responses
- Visual problems
- Impaired mobility
- Impaired cognitive function
- Medical conditions such as stroke, heart disease and dementia
- Medications and susceptibility to side effects (e.g. sedation, impaired coordination, dizziness, blurred vision).

The combination of these factors means that the regular assessment of the medical fitness to drive of older drivers is necessary.

Medical examination

Licence renewal requirements apply at age 75, 80 and then every 2 years after that.

The examination is best performed by the patient's own GP or one that is most familiar with their history. This is a weighty responsibility for the GP who has a legal and ethical obligation to ensure that the safety of other road users, as well as the individual, is the primary concern in making any decision on fitness to drive.

During the appointment the GP will discuss with the patient their present state of health and any conditions which may affect their driving. They will also test their eyesight and perform

a full medical examination. The examination length may vary but is expected to take up the whole of a standard appointment.

Satisfactory assessment will result in the issuing to the patient of a completed Medical Certificate for Driver Licence. The GP may however recommend conditions be applied such as corrective lenses, time of day restriction or distance restriction.

Where there is a question about a patient's medical fitness to drive the GP may refer their patient for a more specialist assessment by an optometrist, geriatrician, cardiologist or for an occupational therapist driving assessment. Only once these assessments are reported back may the GP complete the Medical certificate.

If a patient is medically fit but the GP has serious concerns about their ability to drive safely, the GP can refer them for an On-road Safety Test.

General points

Driving medicals are essentially private medicals conducted on behalf of Land Transport and at the patient's own expense. Unlike other private medicals, as a service to our many elderly patients, this has hitherto been done within the context of a subsidised appointment. Patients are therefore encouraged to book a separate appointment for this purpose alone. Please book within 60 days before the licence is due to expire and it is advisable not to leave it too close to the expiry in case further specialist assessment is required.

Patients are encouraged not to combine these appointments with prescription requests or bring other issues to be dealt with as there is rarely time to resolve these to the satisfaction of both GP and patient. It is at the discretion of the GP if time permits for other issues to be dealt with quickly but such requests will then mean the driving certificate will attract an extra certificate fee (currently \$19) in addition to the standard consultation fee.

Finally don't forget to bring your glasses for the medical examination.

Safe driving!

After Hours Services

Over the last couple of years there have been GP workforce problems on the Kapiti Coast which have resulted in some practices closing their books, and others reducing their surgery hours. In Waikanae we have been able to recruit sufficient numbers of doctors and nurses to ensure that to date we have not had to compromise our services in any way. However we are now in a position where we are forced to look at the sustainability of our after hours services, particularly on the weekends. A number of our doctors live in Wellington, and providing an on-call doctor from 8am to 11pm seven days a week is no longer possible.

We have therefore decided to make two changes to our after hours availability:

- Our on-call doctor will be available from 8.00am until 8.00pm daily Monday to Saturday
- On Sundays the surgery will be closed and there will be no on-call WHC doctor.

Waikanae Health Centre patients will still have access to assistance by phoning 293 6002 after hours (at ANY time outside of surgery hours). Calls will be triaged by a Registered Nurse, who will be able to advise callers of the options available to them depending on their needs. These options may include calling an ambulance, or visiting the Accident and Medical service at Kenepuru Hospital which is open overnight.

Our opening hours Monday to Saturday remain as follows:

Monday - Thursday	8.00am - 7.00pm
Friday	8.00am - 5.30pm
Saturday	9.00am - 12 noon and 4.00pm - 6.00pm

The above changes will take effect from Sunday 1 February 2009.

Requests for Prescriptions

Our nurses are dealing with extremely high volumes of prescriptions and we do appreciate your assistance by being clear and specific when leaving requests. Repeat prescription request forms are available at reception for you to complete,

and we encourage patients to use these. Please remember that a notice period of 48 hours (or two working days) is required for us to process your request.

Thank you