



Murray-Plains
Division of
General Practice

'Tuesday Facts'



Quality
Improvement
Council
'Yes ... we are
a QIC accredited
organisation'

Tuesday 5 April 2011 - Issue 38-10/11

UPCOMING EVENTS

APRIL

Wednesday 13

GP Workforce Shortage
Committee Meeting
Cohuna Hospital,
Cohuna 7:00pm

Friday 29

"Greek Festival of Flowers"
Dinner (GP family event)
Nik's Greek Tavern,
Echuca 7:00pm

MAY

Wednesday 4

NPS - Cardiovascular
Disease Risk
Small Group Meeting,
Venue TBC
Kerang 7:00pm

Tuesday 10

VMPF – Obstetrics
Kerang District Health,
Kerang 7:00pm

*If you would like further
details on any of these
events, please do not
hesitate to contact
Daria Atkinson on
5481 1300 or email
datkinson@mpdgp.com.au*

REMINDER: SPIROMETRY TRAINING COURSE

Friday 8 April 2011 is the closing date for registrations for the Spirometry training course to be held on Saturday 21 May in Echuca. This event is for GPs, Practice Nurses and Asthma and Respiratory Nurse Educators. Please contact Murray-Plains on 03 5481 1300.

NATIONAL TOBACCO CAMPAIGN - BREAK THE CHAIN

The Break the Chain campaign aims to contribute to halving the smoking rate for Indigenous Australians (currently at 47%) by gaining a higher level of personal acknowledgment of the health impacts of smoking. The campaign will support quit attempts amongst smokers and promote strategies to avoid relapse among quitters. Resources and more information are available at

<http://www.quitnow.info.au/internet/quitnow/publishing.nsf/Content/ntc-break-the-chain>

NEW DISABILITY PARKING SCHEME

GPs are having to sign-off on more medical certificates for their patients as a new national disabled permit system is rolled-out this month. Thousands of Australians have to get their doctors to sign their applications for a new national Disability Parking Permit, which came into force on Friday, replacing state-run schemes. And the criteria for the new permit have changed, with anyone who does not require a "large mobility device" such as a four wheeled walker or a wheelchair, no longer qualifying for the disability parking permit. Some doctors have been angered with the changes, which will see patients who rely on crutches or walking sticks no longer eligible to get a permit. Brisbane GP Dr Thomas Lyons told the *Courier Mail* he was phoned and interviewed about two of his patients, who were refused permits. "This new process is a waste of my time when I have a waiting room full," he said. "The patients had painful disabilities but did not require a large wheelie walker." "I was advised they would be declined." From April 1, the new Australian Disability Parking Permit must be displayed with the state permit to continue to be eligible for parking concessions or the driver will be fined.

DID YOU KNOW???



The time spent by a practice nurse (or a registered Aboriginal health worker) in assisting a GP can only be included when claiming time-tiered health assessment items 701 – 707.

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WHAT CAN A HOME MEDICINE REVIEW PROVIDE?

Current, concise list of your patient's medication (including herbal and OTC preparations)

- Improved patient understanding and compliance of medication resulting in better health outcomes.
- Assessment of interactions and adverse effects between their prescriptions.

Who may benefit?

- Patients taking 5/more medications or had significant changes to treatment in the last 3 months.
- Symptoms suggestive of adverse reactions or Sub-therapeutic response to treatment
- Suspected non-compliance
- Attending a number of differing doctors
- Recent discharge from facility/hospital. Confusion associated with medication or devices.
- Changes in patient's medication management eg: Loss of a spouse whom was responsible for medication management.

NEW GUIDELINES FOR ASSESSING PATIENTS' FITNESS TO DRIVE

In an effort to address the uncertainty - and ensure the medical standards remain up-to-date - the first major revision of the Assessing Fitness to Drive medical standards was released for consultation last year.

Changes to the standards are expected to be released this month, and Dr Jeff Potter, head of safety with the National Transport Commission - which produces the guidelines together with Austroads - says it is hoped the changes will clarify questions of responsibility.

"In the new guidelines, we make it very clear that the responsibility for issuing and withdrawing a license, or imposing conditions on a license, sits with the state licensing authorities," Dr Potter says.

"However, if they are to make the decision in a fair and justifiable way, they need to have the best available advice on the medical condition of the driver concerned. We need ... the medical profession to be able to give the authorities that expert advice," he said.

The proposed changes shift the focus of assessments from diagnosis towards functionality. Rather than a diagnosis being the major factor in determining whether or not someone is fit to drive, it is the effect of a medical condition on the ability to drive that is more important. In theory, this will entail more use of on-road and off-road driving assessments by occupational therapists and the licensing authorities. However, the National Transport Commission concedes it will remain very difficult for those in rural and remote areas to access these services, so the onus is likely to remain with the GP.

The updating of the medical standards hasn't seen dramatic changes, but the fine print includes the deletion of chapters considering temporary conditions such as pregnancy, the inclusion of specifications and explanation regarding hypoglycemic unawareness, and for the first time the guidelines will prohibit any private or commercial vehicle drivers diagnosed with dementia from holding an unconditional license.

The commission is working with the RACGP to ensure GPs are informed when the new standards come into effect later this year, and to explain what they will mean in practice.