

Blog: 28th March, 2022

Autumn has arrived suddenly after all that hot weather and I have a cardigan on today despite it being a high of 23°C. Well, in my defence, I am a climate refugee from the far southern reaches of Aotearoa!

It's even Influenza jab time too being Autumn.

This year's Fluvax covers A/Victoria 2019 [It's a H1 N1 and been around for a few years here and over the ditch] and A/Darwin/2021 which as you can see by the typing is new. It also covers B/Austria and B/Phuket which have been responsible to most of the influenza coming on the heels of Covid-19 over winter in Europe. Some years we get the strains right more than others, but this year we have lots of clever typing intelligence from Australia and as influenza has surged there in the wake of covid-19, we do expect it to do so here too. Late Autumn is traditionally when the infection starts to spread, and as it will coincide with the tail of covid-19, it is even more important this year to be as protected as possible.

We know from Australia and Europe that it is possible to have both covid-19 and influenza at the same time and both the seriousness, complications and deaths are 2-5x higher than having either one alone.

We are returning to the front folding windows to do these vaccinations from the front carpark and still avoiding closed spaces and paperwork which we know can increase the risk of transmission of viral disease.

Our first clinic is the morning of Wednesday 6th April. Please arrange appointments with our receptionists. This is our first clinic and we are going to discuss how and what we will be doing at our weekly Tuesday 1-2pm Staff meeting and Lunch. I will put it up on my blogs once we have worked out the safest acceptable way to deliver these to our patients. Kay, our ex-practice nurse, has offered to come in and do these and this could work very well for patients and staff alike.

Dr Mick is now doing some telephone consultations in the mornings Monday, Wednesday and Friday, but otherwise his patients are being ably looked after by Dr Dominic Smith [or occasionally by me.].

Covid-19 is tailing off thankfully in our community. Normally Monday's bring a whole slew of new cases but today nurse Kathy is only looking after 16 today, and nearly all of these are family contacts.

It has been wonderful having nurse Kathy back helping out: she was the very first Practice Nurse I worked with and we have been friends ever since. She brings a whole career of knowledge and our patients with covid-19 have all been having calls- daily if needed- from her to check up on them no charge to them. None of these calls cost the patients. We promised from the beginning we would look after our patients and we have.

No system, however well anticipated, could cope with the sudden onslaught covid-19 had in our community of South Auckland, so it was hands to the deck for us all. Kathy discusses all but the straight forward mild cases with me and arranges with me scripts if required, even in the weekends. It has been wonderful to have her take the load off my shoulders, and give me weekends with only a few queries or scripts to call thru to the after hours chemists, and allowed me to recharge and recoup from the weekdays. In fact the help these last three weekends mean I am feeling back to myself and no longer as tired. We do have Dr Ranche Johnson joining us on a part time basis. Ranche is a very experienced GP who because she still has two teens at home works part time but more of her in a blog when she starts next month on Fridays.

I'm hoping we can get back to ordinary surgeries soon. That is patients who want to come in can. We will retain telephone consultations [and their cheaper cost] as they suit some people and they

suit some circumstances. But it would be lovely to see patients in person again when we can. Currently I am seeing patients in person after 11.30am in the morning and 4pm in the afternoon so I don't have to put on and take off PPE gear all the time increasing the possibility of contamination and sweltering to death in them They are hot!

Be well, be safe. I for one am going to continue with mask use in the supermarket and shopping even after mandates end. Thank you to everyone for being so understanding but all our precautions have kept this surgery up and running and available to our patients when we know of many surgeries that closed down sometimes for as long as 2-3 weeks.

Na, Dr Jacqueline and all the team here [and that includes all those casual nurses and receptionists who fronted up to help thru these extraordinary times].