

Blog: 18<sup>th</sup> April 2022

So hard to predict at the moment. Are we having a long tail, that is a very gradual letdown from the high number of early March? Or are we starting the second wave that some, not me, predicted to happen as people try to return to normal life, that happened in Australia, particularly NSW and Queensland? Our numbers at the surgery have slowed, and we recognise we might not be picking up even all those who have mild cases and positive RAT tests because of the complexities of notifying it to Public Health. There's often long waits to get through, and even longer times to fill out all the forms of information they want, especially around all the members of the household with all their dates of birth and vaccinations! No wonder some people get frustrated and give up. I realise our unvaccinated have been reluctant to notify, but I wish they would as that is how our surgery is notified and then we can look after them with daily phone calls, equipment loans like oximeters to monitor lung involvement and scripts as needed.

All this extra care from us is at no cost to the patient. If we are worried we will ring more than once a day and we don't care as we have been avoiding hospital admissions very well. I have only wanted to admit two patients because of covid-19 and neither wanted to go, so with either me or our nurse Kathy ringing daily we have got through safely. There is no cost to patients with care so please at least notify us if you have a positive RAT test. We promised to care for our patients through this time and want to if you let us know.

Is it a second wave? Even though South Auckland was the epicentre, the first off the block, it's too early to tell. It's Easter and Kathy is ringing about 20 patients a day, ½ of which are newly notified. Many need little follow-up and luckily don't need further calls but there are some who are having a rough time, or have other illnesses like asthma triggered and need daily follow-up. Some just need sick notes or are running out of regular medicines. Please remember all these services we are not charging the patient for in any way so don't hesitate to ask. Kathy and I converse frequently and have a slick service between us going at getting scripts for antibiotics, ibuprofen and paracetamol out to patient's pharmacies of choice, loaning out finger oximeters and sending out Peak Flow Meters. And by the way, this very experienced Practice Nurse keeps commenting about how lovely our patients are when she rings.

Thank you to her, and thank you to yourselves. What is noticeable about current calls is there are now far less kids with covid-19 and its moved up the age groups into childless houses as people start to venture out again. Masks worn for under 4 hrs and frequent use of hand wash is all I can suggest to mitigate the risks, along with picking less crowded times to shop, choosing outdoor activities over indoor ones and even dining outside if possible.

We are still restricting inside consultations at the surgery. While I start telephone consultations at 8am, I have not been seeing patients inside until 11am-1pm and after 4pm. This means I'm not in PPE gear- it's hot!-all day long, but crucially by me screening patients first we reduce the risk of covid-19 among our staff and

consequent surgery closure. There are examples of some surgeries being closed totally for three weeks. While I said before it could be Easter when we open up entirely, Dr Mick is still recovering at home and only available for Monday, Wednesday and Friday morning telephone consultations, and Dr Ranche Johnson has just started helping out on Fridays, so it is too early for us to risk it. I am sure the situation will be clearer by the end of this month.

Dr Ranche has joined us now and is helping out Fridays, and I hope we can arrange for her to come on board for more days in the week as she is a very experienced GP, a Fellow of the College, and already the staff love having her with us. She's a mum with two teens still at home [and two more flown], a Auckland Med School graduate and very much in tune with our patients.

There's other new staff too on the desk helping out Ana. I'm sure many of you will have talked with by now with Royalene and Jamie. More about them in another blog.

Fluvax continue to go well at the window! Patients are enjoying catching up with nurse Kay who like with the covid-19 vax has come back to do them. It is the most sensible way to do them outside: last week a patient who was vaccinated this way notified us of a positive RAT test the next day. The lack of contact, queues and avoiding inside rooms [despite how good our ventilation is] meant no-one around them has tested positive. Thank you once again to our patients who use masks and distance well, and to Kay for such good precautions.

Nga mihi, Jacqueline and all the other staff, Dr Dominic, Dr Mick, Dr Ranche, Paulette and Rachel our nurses, Meriana our Practice Manager, and Ana, Royalene and Jamie on the desk with help when needed from Jane and our other Rachel.