

Blog: 16.07.23

Bleak weather, but the days are noticeably lengthening already, or is just the cloud cover lifting to let the watery sun through? Frosts are noticeably absent as the fog and drizzle keep them at bay. And our garden which is trees and shrubs more than flowers [I don't have the time] is a surprising profusion of colour with blooms on camelias, climbing roses, and even some orange daylilies to the delight of the Irishman.

Despite the colds and influenza it doesn't really seem like a usual busy July. Now we are back as an influenza sentinel site- a part of our NZ World Health Organisation commitment -we are getting regular feedback about all the other respiratory viruses out there, and its true: there are less viruses out there than usual for this time of the year.

New staff are now settled in and keen to show their skills, Eseta Fonoti on reception and Claire Zhang as our new Health care assistant. Both are experienced in NZ General practice and bring second languages to our practice, Samoan, and Chinese for patients still developing fluency in English. Claire trained in China as a doctor but her lack of hospital time means she would have to start over again in New Zealand, and as she says it was hard enough getting her head around all the medical concepts and jargon in Mandarin without having to learn it again in English. [Some Chinese Medical degrees are now considered acceptable in NZ, but it is one thing to have the demanded excellent spoken fluency in such a difficult and very different language as English, another to learn to read and write it, and then to relearn all the words and ideas in medicine in another language? It's amazing any do. I have sympathy for one of our local vets from the Horn of Africa who just found it much easier to retrain as a vet! But Claire is a quick and keen learner and her help is greatly appreciated by our nurses.

We are working to get our new fees and lists of charges around add-on services that are not paid for by Te Whatu Ora up on the website. Sometimes we can claim costs for followup and extras like ECGs through a program called POAC if what we are doing is keeping you out of Middlemore's dreadfully overloaded A and E. Lancing boils and doing IV antibiotics for cellulitis are two examples. Others with serious chronic illnesses which lead to frequent hospital admissions can often be claimed under POAC or another program run by our PHO and we always claim if we can. We know how hard it is out there at the moment. We are all mums and have families, including grandchildren. On Saturday doing my food shop for the week ahead I couldn't believe the cost of kumara: I thought \$6/kg at this time of year was steep but kumara was \$19/kg and tokatoka \$20.....even the sack of potatoes that I bought for under \$15 is now nearly \$30! [I didn't buy the kumara and made the sensible swap for some frozen veges instead]. Weather events, cost of fuel and imported inflation I know, but understanding why doesn't make it easier to manage. Doctors haven't had a rise of pay for many years- yes, really!- and the nurses catchup is sorely needed to slow the 4 lane highway over the Tasman sea.

We are still having computer problems arising out of the changeover in base programs by our cloud provider. At least being on the Cloud means our data is secure. In the event of a horrific fire like suffered by the Tuakau surgery a few years ago we would immediately have

access to all our patient files and data in a new location. I'm not sure where that would be as we used to have an arrangement that in the case of a major disaster, like volcanic activity or an earthquake we would decamp to RSA, alongside Civil Defence and the Ambulance, both who would hopefully have generators to share, and information for us to work for all who needed us. If anyone has ideas for us where we could go in emergency situations please will they share it with us? Our contact is <admin@tiakinateora.co.nz> or come in and talk with Meriana or myself.

At least we are finally getting H365 up and running so appointments can be booked online. Remember we each keep 6-8 appointments a day for same day bookings- phones are open at 7.45am to book these- for patients who are sick and need to be seen that or the next day- not in 4-6 weeks time. We also keep "urgent" slots. These are for exactly that, sick babies are always seen as urgent in our practice, kids with sore ears, bladder infections, patients with chest pain and acutely painful abdomens, etc. These go through the nurses: the receptionist will put you through to them if you ring and there are no more appointments available that day and you explain that you do feel you need to be seen now. If they agree they may just bring you in and see what is happening and then they will grab whichever doctor they see to come and sort out what they can't. So, if it looks like we are booked up online, ring. We also get cancellations that come up throughout the day.

In an effort to run our appointment system more efficiently and reduce waiting times and wastage we are going to introduce a fee for patients who do not cancel appointment more than 2 hours prior to the appointment and just do not turn up. If you get stung this way and have a good reason, please tell Meriana. She will listen and this fee will be waived. I am not so sure how to deal with increasing traffic issues other than to be sympathetic and glad I do not have to deal with the Southern Motorway or the Hingaia Bridge/ northern onramp onto the motorway causing traffic backup up past Karaka Village. Please just notify us as soon as you are stuck and we will let you know our situation at the surgery and strive to work something out that works for us both. Traffic problems at the patients end are kin to doctors held up on the phone to Middlemore trying to get a patient admitted!

Ma te wa, Jacqueline and the rest of the great team at Tiakina Te Ora.