

February 2023 Newsletter -



Hello - welcome to our first newsletter for 2023.

After a lovely but wet summer break, Dr Ric writes:

A warm welcome to the Millhouse community and other readers,

Since the onset of Covid, New Zealand general practices have experienced greater demand for acute medical services as well as patients needing increased psychological and social support. Consequently, primary care has often been too stretched to assist patients in learning how to self-manage their medical conditions to improve health.

I am grateful for the dedication and support of the Millhouse Team – our doctors, nurses, management and reception staff - who during the last two years have endeavoured to respond to all enquiries and medical issues. I am thankful that we were able to replace Josie and Michael, when they resigned, with experienced Practice Nurses Phyll and Sue. Gabriella's contribution has been immense, seeing many acute patients with complex problems, as she trained to become a Registered Nurse Practitioner. In this edition I will introduce a further innovation in meeting patient needs.

In this edition.....

- Gratitude to dedicated Millhouse Team for 2022
- Health Improvement Role
- Our doctors' specialties
- Role of Vitamin D
- Long Covid Trial
- Four Country Covid Review continued
- Exercise options

and this month Dr Ric expands on the role of our new Health Improvement Practitioner

MILLHOUSE NEWS

- **Personnel Changes:** we are delighted to welcome Vani El-Khishin as our practice Health Improvement Practitioner (HIP) also known as Behavioural Health Consultant.
- **Your Own Doctor:** To be able to have a doctor who knows you and your health concerns is a core value at Millhouse clinic. You select that doctor when you register and we endeavour to maintain that ongoing relationship. There will be times however when your doctor is not available and you need consult another member of our medical team - a doctor, Gabriella our Nurse Practitioner or one of the Practice Nurses. The website outlines our doctors' special interest areas and the alternate languages in which they can communicate.

- **Protective Masks:** Masks continue to be worn at Millhouse, so that COVID virus is neither given nor received during a consultation. If you are uncomfortable with this decision, please choose a Video or Phone consultation with your family doctor or Practice Nurse. Face-To-Face consultations are available by phoning Reception; other appointments can be made online.

A New Initiative in General Practice

In the 1960's, the Californian Kaiser Permanente organization, one of the largest not-for-profit health consortiums in the USA, realised that 60% of all doctor visits were related to stress and other emotional factors which adversely affect patient health. Kaiser explored less-costly behavioural approaches and other managed-care institutions also trialed brief targeted change interventions. These initiatives used *Behavioral Health Consultants (BHC)*, in Hawaii, Florida and Minnesota, and this approach was found was more effective and cheaper than traditional treatments.



In 2018, the NZ Government's nation-wide inquiry into '[Mental Health and Addiction](#)' showed that an "epidemic of mental distress and addiction affected all layers of our society". One of the follow-up strategies the Ministry of Health (MOH) implemented was to pilot, in 2020, a Health Improvement Practitioner (HIP) initiative in general practice, modelled on the North American BHC experience. The trial was successful and the MOH is gradually rolling out the HIP program throughout New Zealand. HIPs work side-by-side with the medical team, using brief targeted behaviour changes to enhance preventive and clinical care for mental health, and to relieve emotional distress and adverse effects of chronic illness. As well as improving patient wellness, this integrated care approach fosters greater communication between individuals and the primary health team.



In December 2022, Millhouse was given the opportunity to have a HIP at the clinic. We have been privileged to have Vani El-Khishin join us. Vani is a skilled therapist with 15 years social work experience. She has empowered individuals and families, counselled the grieving, supported those suffering emotional and physical stress, and encouraged many to explore new wellness strategies. The side bar above outlines the specific areas our HIP coach (Vani) can help with.

Vani is based fulltime at Millhouse. Her consultations are free and there are no barriers for practice-enrolled persons seeing her. Appointments are for 20-30 min and can be made by ringing Reception. Half her time is taken with prearranged bookings and the remaining appointments Vani uses for pressing same-day referrals.

In this newsletter I also briefly follow up on the Covid four-country experiences, and comment on a successful Long Covid pilot trial, on Vitamin D, and on the importance of exercise to improve health and wellness.

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Covid News

New Zealand continues to have a high rate of Covid infection, new variants seem to be no more dangerous than Omicron.. Research into Long Covid, which resemblances other prolonged flu-like malaises will hopefully bring about new understanding and treatments.....

Low Vitamin D

A recent report from Johns Hopkins University showed Vitamin D supplementation was associated with better outcomes in Covid illness.....

New Options for Exercise ..

The human body was designed to move, and exercise is the ultimate panacea to improve health and wellness. But exercise is hard work and requires persistence many cant achieve. Recent research suggests short bursts of vigorous exercise for 15–20 min/week were effective in lowering the risk of heart disease and cancer.....

Yours in good health
Dr Ric Coleman