

GP Community Briefs

Keeping you up to date with the activities of the Northern Rivers Division of General Practice

February 2006

Lifescrpts for a healthier life

People visiting their GP may start to notice some posters and brochures promoting preventative health in the waiting room of their local general practice.

The *Lifescrpts* initiative is a national approach to address preventative health care using quality patient education materials. In this region, we at the Northern Rivers Division of General Practice are promoting the *Lifescrpts* concept to general practices.

A GP or practice nurse may use the *Lifescrpts* material when providing lifestyle advice to a patient. Advice may be about quitting smoking, increasing physical activity, eating a healthier diet, maintaining healthy weight, reducing alcohol consumption, or a combination of these.

"Brief lifestyle interventions in a consultation have been shown to be very effective. Think of the success that doctors have had advising patients about their smoking," Tintenbar GP, Dr Lynne Davies, who is the GP advisor on the project, said.

Lennox Head resident Elaine Sulkowicz, who was the

first patient at Dr Davies' practice to be introduced to the *Lifescrpts* initiative, was very receptive to the concept of a preventative health program.

Part of the material includes an assessment pad that patients can complete before their consultation and this was something Mrs Sulcowicz was able to do while waiting to see Dr Davies.

"Lifestyle issues are so important," Dr Davies said. "*Lifescrpts* is a very useful resource package that will help us as GPs to focus on helping our patients make small lifestyle changes, which can have a great effect on their overall health."

Change may not happen overnight, but it would happen Dr Davies added and she encouraged patients to make an appointment with their GP or the practice nurse.



Tintenbar GP Lynne Davies (r) discusses some lifestyle issues with Lennox Head patient

Elaine Sulkowicz. Mrs Sulkowicz is the first patient in the Tintenbar

Medical Centre to be introduced to the *Lifescrpts* initiative and is very receptive to the concept of a preventative health program.



Need help to quit?

If you are a smoker one of the most important health messages to act on is to give up smoking.

Your GP or the practice nurse are both well placed to offer you advice and help to quit smoking.

Nicotine replacement therapy may form part of the recommended plan of action for you when you are ready to give up smoking. It is an evidence based product best combined with advice and support through your general practice. It is just one part of a bigger picture of care your GP will bring up when discussing an action plan with you to help you stop smoking.

QUITLINE
137 848
www.quit.org.au

Smoking is one of the five patient lifestyle risk factors of smoking, alcohol, nutrition, physical activity and weight management that are part of the *Lifescrpts* initiative.

Lifescrpts is supported and promoted by


NORTHERN RIVERS
DIVISION OF GENERAL PRACTICE

Confused about your medication?

When you next visit your general practice, your GP or the practice nurse might suggest that you consider a home visit from a pharmacist to help you sort out your medicines.

You might have diabetes or asthma for example, be on a number of medications for another chronic condition, have recently been to hospital and had medications changed, or be over 75 and have a mixed bag of medications that may be causing you some confusion.

about their medications and potential interactions as a matter of course during their health assessment or treatment time with me. It's a great opportunity to discuss the possibility of a Home Medicines Review," she says.

If the patient is keen, Di will set the process in motion by starting a medication management plan and booking the patient in for an appointment with their GP.

"I've found patients really like HMRs," she says. "They really feel like someone's



Practice nurse at Ballina West Medical Centre Di Mouncey chats to patient Keith Parsons.

The Home Medicines Review (HMR) program aims to help people manage their medications. The pharmacist can also review any other over the counter medications you might be taking, as well as herbal and complementary preparations. The pharmacist can highlight any potential problems with medication interactions in the recommendations report to your GP.

Di Mouncey is a practice nurse at Ballina West Medical Centre and she is a keen supporter of HMRs. Di notes improved patient care as one of the main benefits of the HMR program.

"Patients will often ask

looking after them. Older people are often confused about their medications and the HMR really helps them, especially as it's done in their own home where they are comfortable and free from distractions."

Medications are a great for helping us to manage illness and live longer and healthier lives but the reality is they can also cause problems if administered, stored or maintained incorrectly. The HMR will help you understand why, when and how to take your medications to ensure you enjoy optimal health and wellbeing and giving you peace of mind.

Just lovin' rural general practice

Although Tintenbar GP Lynne Davies was a city kid, brought up in Manchester in England, she knew she always wanted to practice in the country. Perhaps it was the influence of the farming arm of her family.

When she was a medical student, she always chose the rural terms. When she came to the Antipodes on a working holiday, she sought out rural practices in both New Zealand and Australia.

She didn't intend to stay in Australia, but visas get extended and the years start to roll by and now, more than 15 years later, Lynne is still here, practising in the tiny village of Tintenbar.

"I love the diversity of the work. You have the freedom to really cover any medical interests that you have."

Also attractive is the small, close knit community.

"The patient base is more stable. You come to know your patients as individuals and the extended family, and where they fit in the community. I find it a lot more rewarding and get a lot more insight into my patients [than city practice]."

But at the end of the day, Lynne simply prefers being a



Tintenbar GP, Dr Lynne Davies

country kid. Her delightful practice is set on its own grounds in lush tropical surrounds. The birdlife and cicadas provide soothing background chatter, both for the patients and the doctors working there.

"I like being a part of the community where I work and the lifestyle that goes with it. It is a lovely setting here and the aim of the surgery was to set up somewhere enjoyable to work and relaxing for people to come to."



www.parenting.nrdgp.org.au

For parents with children from newborn to around one year of age who are having difficulties, or require further support with: feeding (breast, weaning, bottle, solids); unsettled behaviour and related sleeping patterns; adjustment to parenthood issues for the family; postnatal distress; or parentcraft issues.

ASK YOUR GP FOR A REFERRAL.

FEEDBACK: We value your feedback. If you would like to make the division aware of any ideas for possible health projects, or if you have comments on any of our current projects, please call us on 6622 4453, or email media@nrdgp.org.au. Thank you.