

GP Community Briefs

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

June 2006

Make today the day to quit smoking

Just imagining the look on her grown children's faces is enough to keep Larnook woman Kim Kena from taking up smoking again.

Her son wept for joy when she told him that she had given up. So did she. She is determined not to disappoint him and all the people who have been so supportive of her since she finally gave away her 33 year smoking habit almost a year ago.

Whilst Kim had stopped smoking for up to two years around the pregnancy and birth of each of her three children, she always went back on them. She found it easy to give up when she knew her smoking would affect her unborn children, but going cold turkey several times over the years when she was not pregnant was a different story. She was always smoking again within a couple of weeks.

The problem was that Kim actually enjoyed the ritual of smoking and couldn't feel the health risk and damage from it. More recently, she realised that she was one of a dwindling number of people having to duck outside for a smoke and was the only one in her circle still lighting up. It began to feel more and more anti-social.

"I just wasn't comfortable with my smoking anymore, as much as I enjoyed it," Kim said.

What finally helped her quit was a combination of factors – a support group, nicotine patches and a Quit website. The nicotine patches took away the chronic cravings and got her over the critical first few months. She also avoided her triggers – drinking coffee and going out for a drink

with her friends for example.

Kim has rewarded herself with the purchase of her first motorbike. "I've earned this," she says with a laugh.

Different quitting techniques work for different people. To that end, the Northern Rivers Division of General Practice's smoking cessation project recently offered local GPs, practice nurses, pharmacists and pharmacy assistants training in improved techniques for helping their patients give up smoking.

"There is no one way to give up cigarettes as can be seen in Kim's case, but nicotine replacement therapy has been proven to reduce the cravings, and typically doubles someone's likelihood of successfully quitting if they use it correctly" project advisor Dr Dan Ewald said.

Nicotine is the addictive drug in cigarettes and this is what makes it so hard to give up. But with every cigarette comes a host of toxic chemicals that cause a great number of health problems. Some of them a person will feel, like poorer fitness, while other effects like stroke or heart attack may not give you any warning.

Smoking actually doubles the risk of heart attack and heavy smoking doubles it again. Dr Ewald said smokers who had high cholesterol, high blood pressure, or diabetes, or were physically inactive or overweight, had a greatly increased risk of getting heart and vascular disease.

Smoking also causes 90 per cent of lung cancer cases. Cigarette smoke contains about 4,000 chemicals. Tar coats the lungs and spreads through the breathing system



Kim Kena

like soot in a chimney.

"Most lung cancers cannot be removed by surgery and by the time symptoms appear, it is usually too late to stop the spread of the disease," Dr Ewald said.

There is some good news for smokers though. Smokers who quit before they get cancer or serious heart or lung disease from smoking reduce nearly all the added risks of death and disability from smoking, according to Dr Ewald. This risk decreases the longer you have not smoked.

"Your GP or pharmacist can help you quit and there is also the invaluable 24 hour Quitline on 137 848. It is never too late to make a difference."

Wednesday 31 May was World No Tobacco Day.

New GP in Nimbin



The Nimbin Medical Centre has recruited a new GP to the town.

Dr Marc Droulers joined the practice, which is run by the Northern Rivers Division of General Practice, in April and is available for consultations four days a week. This means that more appointments are now available to the community and that there is currently only a short wait to be seen.

Dr Droulers, who has a particular interest in emergency medicine and palliative care, has also applied for an appointment at the hospital.

A resident of the Northern

Rivers for the last 10 years, Dr Droulers is a former nurse. Graduating in medicine from Sydney University in 1996, he moved to Lismore to do his residency in 1997. In 1999 he decided to move to the region permanently and he worked in St Vincent's Hospital until his move to the Nimbin Medical Centre.

The mix of general practice and hospital work are ideally suited to his skills base and he is busy settling in to the practice, where he is enjoying the variety of the work and the people, all in a beautiful location.

Breastfeeding support clinic helps local mums

A free weekly breastfeeding support clinic in Lismore has already helped one local mum and her newborn baby.

Lia Masman went to the Northern Rivers Family Care Centre's new breastfeeding support clinic when she was having difficulty establishing breastfeeding with her second child Dylan.

She had had no problems first time around, she said, but every baby was different. Lia found the clinic really helpful and said it only took a couple of visits to the clinic for baby Dylan to start feeding well.

"It would be more frustrating without the service and some people wouldn't persist with breastfeeding," she said.

The breastfeeding support clinics have been established in Lismore to help mothers who are experiencing difficulties establishing and sustaining breastfeeding. These include a by



Lia Masman and her 16 day old baby, Dylan, pictured at the drop in breastfeeding support clinic at Lismore library.

nurse, Caroline Ryan, said.

The YWCA Community for Children program provided the \$114,000 to set up and run the clinic through the Family Care Centre, which is operated by the Northern Rivers Division of General Practice.

Caroline offers education, support and assistance to mothers to help them overcome any problems they may be experiencing and to establish and maintain successful breastfeeding. She provides assistance with all breastfeeding problems such as painful and damaged nipples, mastitis, and milk supply problems. She can also help mothers enhance the optimal positioning and attachment of their baby to their breast.

Caroline will refer any mothers who need assistance with other mothering issues to the Northern Rivers Family Care Centre.

Contact Caroline on 6622 8705 for enquiries and appointments, or pop along to the drop in clinic at the library.

BREASTFEEDING SUPPORT CLINICS

Tuesday, 9:30am-12:30pm

Tuesday, 1:00pm-4:00pm

Friday, 9:00am-4:00pm

Drop in to parents' room, Lismore Library

By appointment, NR Family Care Centre

By appointment, NR Family Care Centre

PH. 6622 8705 FOR MORE INFO

appointment clinic in the Northern Rivers Family Care Centre and a drop in clinic in the parents' room at the Lismore library.

"Sometimes it is difficult

for new mothers to meet appointment times and the drop in clinic has been designed to facilitate this," lactation consultant and child and family health

HEALTH SERVICES DIRECTORY BEING UPDATED

The Northern Rivers Division of General Practice is updating its regional on-line health services directory. This is a free community resource for the medical and general communities. People looking for local health services and contact details will be able to access the updated directory at www.nrdgp.org.au within a few weeks. Specialist doctors, allied health professionals and other local health services are invited to submit their details for inclusion in the directory. Phone the NRDGP on 6622 4453 for more information.

For parenting tips and advice, check out:

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; post-natal distress; or parentcraft issues.

ASK YOUR GP FOR A REFERRAL.



"Vax'em"

www.vaccination.org.au

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.