MEDIA RELEASE

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Urgent Care Centre set to open

Patients with minor injuries and complaints, who cannot see a GP, will soon be able to visit the Urgent Care Centre in Blenheim.

The centre, due to open on 4 December, is co-located next to Wairau Hospital Emergency Department and will replace the After-Hours GP clinic.

Marlborough Primary Health Organisation chief executive Beth Tester says the Urgent Care Centre is available for patients with non-life threatening, short-term illnesses or health problems who cannot see a GP.

"The centre staff will triage patients when they arrive and they'll either be treated in the Urgent Care Centre or transferred to ED if they require access to specialist care," she says.

Research showed nearly 40 per cent of patients attending the ED could have been treated elsewhere and Beth says the Urgent Care Centre will help manage these patients in the right setting.

"While our campaign calling to save ED for emergencies has resulted in the number of presentations reducing, we still need to see more people in a primary care setting and leave ED for life-threatening or complex cases that need specialist skills."

Marlborough PHO Chairman, Alistair Sowman says the region's aging demographics, combined with high visitor numbers and the seasonal worker community, also reinforces the need for the new Urgent Care Centre.

"In the first instance we encourage people to go to their GP, as he or she should be their number one healthcare provider," he says. "However, the centre will be convenient for residents and visitors to Marlborough, and give greater access to healthcare - it will also take the pressure off the Emergency Department at Wairau Hospital."

The Urgent Care Centre will be staffed by a multi-disciplinary team that includes GPs and Primary Care Nurse Practitioners, nurses and Health Care Assistants who can access support and advice, when necessary, from Emergency Medicine consultants.

Patients requiring urgent care, including anyone who is not a permanent resident or enrolled with a Marlborough GP, may visit the centre between 8am -8pm, seven days a week.

The Urgent Care Centre phone number is (03) 520 6377 (the same as the former After Hours GP Service)

A scalable fee structure for patients will be in place, with patients under 13 free. Overseas visitors and people not registered with a GP in the region pay more, while ACC-covered injuries, children and Community Services cardholders pay less.

Urgent Care Centre Open Day: 12 noon, Saturday 2 December the new Urgent Care Centre will be open to the public.

Ends

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