

# In-house specialists



The many special interests of GPs at Littlehampton Medical Centre allow the practice to provide its broad patient demographic with a wide range of healthcare services.

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Littlehampton Medical Centre, the RACGP's 2015 South Australian Practice of the Year, is a small-town practice with a big range of health services.

Littlehampton Medical Centre, named for the Adelaide Hills town in which it is located, first opened its doors in 2010 following a move from nearby Mount Barker. This relocation was undertaken to gain extra rooms for the practice and to better service the local community, and those rooms have since been put to very good use.

Littlehampton Medical Centre is a large practice that employs 16 doctors, five nurses and 11 administrative staff in order to best serve the health needs of a broad patient demographic.

'We cover cradle to the grave,' Dr Boris Eskandari-Marandi, GP and one of Littlehampton Medical Centre's practice principals, told *Good Practice*. 'The Adelaide Hills area, especially around Mount Barker and Littlehampton, has quite a few new developments so a lot of young families have moved into the area. You also have older families that have been in the hills for generations.'

'A couple of our doctors are general practice obstetricians who do deliveries at the nearby Mount Barker Hospital, so we get

patients when they are very young. A number of our doctors also do regular nursing home visits, so we see patients all the way at the other spectrum of life.

'This makes our demographic quite broad.'

The work done by general practice obstetricians, for example, offers a hint of the wide-ranging specialties that can be found among the staff members at Littlehampton Medical Centre. Dr Eskandari-Marandi believes this enables the practice to provide quality service for the majority of its patients.

'We can't all be experts at everything, so over time we've found that a lot of our GPs have developed special interests,' he said. 'Within our group we have a lot of expertise, from obstetrics and gynaecology, women's and children's health, men's health, mental health, drug and alcohol interests, all the way through to aged care.'

'I run a skin cancer clinic at the centre where I perform screenings and the accompanying procedures for skin cancers. One of our other GPs is a general practice anaesthetist who services the Mount Barker hospital.'



**Left to right:** Littlehampton Medical Centre's administrative staff members are vital in running the large – and very busy – practice; Dr Boris Eskandari-Marandi believes the practice's 'team-care' approach helps to ensure patients receive the best possible service.



'With the number of GPs we have and their special interests, we've collectively got a lot of experience that allows us to deal with a wide range of issues in-house, rather than having to refer patients on. This team-care approach ensures that patients get a good service from our clinic.

'There's a lot of internal referrals; when one of the GPs feels like they're a bit out of their comfort zone [they can say], "Go and see Dr so-and-so, who's got a special interest in this".'

Some patients with more complicated presentations may also be able to find help close to home, rather than having to travel into Adelaide.

'With a patient who's got a bit more of a complex drug and alcohol issue, for example, we can say, "We've got a couple of doctors who have experience in that area, why don't you go and see them to help you further?", rather than having to rely on some of the drug and alcohol services in the city, which are often harder to get into.'

### Practice partnerships

In addition to a range of specialisations among its doctors, Littlehampton Medical Centre also offers allied health and pathology services, from diabetes education to less common areas like a sleep study. Some of these services are provided by external companies in a partnership that benefits both providers and patients.

'We have an on-site pathology service which provides a wide range of investigations,' Dr Eskandari-Marandi said. 'That is a good arrangement for everyone because the patients can have their blood or other investigations done at the clinic, rather than

having to go off-site. They can get it done there and then.'

This system can be especially helpful in the case of more complex health conditions that require a range of interventions, such as diabetes.

**“ We have a lot of experience that allows us to deal with a wide range of issues in-house ”**

'We have a nurse who is a diabetes educator and she coordinates the care of these patients, which often involves podiatry as well as their regular blood tests. This can all be done in a coordinated fashion: see the nurse, the blood tests are done, the urine tests are done, podiatry is organised,' Dr Eskandari-Marandi said. 'Patients don't need to go too far to be able to receive their required services and to optimally manage their condition.'

The same system applies to Littlehampton Medical Centre's sleep study, which is delivered at the clinic via a mobile service.

'Obstructive sleep apnoea is now implicated in so many other health issues, so it is important to get on top of that. Having someone providing the service within the clinic is quite convenient,' Dr Eskandari-Marandi said. 'The patients come in, get fitted with the sleep-study equipment, go home and have their sleep. Then they come back in the next day and the machine gets taken off and the information gets analysed, and then we get our answer in a timely fashion.'

The doctors at Littlehampton Medical Centre don't always provide all of their

services at the practice. Some of the general practice obstetricians, for example, have got antenatal clinics, which they attend at the Mount Barker Hospital, and general practice anaesthetists take part in the anaesthetic service provided at the hospital.

'Most of the full-timers take part in some form of out-of-hours medical service based in Mount Barker,' Dr Eskandari-Marandi said.

'Most of us have admitting privileges at Mount Barker Hospital and are involved in inpatient management of our patients, as well as some of the patients transferred up from the larger hospitals in Adelaide. So before coming to work [at the practice] we'll do ward rounds and see our inpatients at the hospital. Some of us also provide a service to the local aged care facilities. I do weekly visits to the local nursing homes and see my patients in these facilities.'

Some Littlehampton Medical Centre doctors also perform home visits for frail and palliative care patients.

'It's an arrangement between the patient and the doctor. If they need regular home visits, that's discussed on an individual basis with their doctor,' Dr Eskandari-Marandi explained.

Littlehampton Medical Centre is passionate about ensuring the future of the profession and is actively involved in the training of the next generation of GPs.

'We have the whole gamut in terms of medical training, anything from medical students to registrars to fully qualified GPs,' Dr Eskandari-Marandi said.

'This is one of the reasons we moved to Littlehampton, to have the extra room needed to accommodate the whole range of training and teaching. At the moment we get medical students from both Adelaide and Flinders universities, who rotate regularly through the clinic every few weeks.'

Even with its diverse range of services – as well as the RACGP's South Australian Practice of the Year Award – Littlehampton Medical Centre is always aiming to improve.

'We are up-skilling one of our nurses to become an asthma educator,' Dr Eskandari-Marandi said. 'We look after many patients with asthma and other respiratory conditions, but to actually have an educator on-site would be very useful. This will further enhance the care of this group of patients the same way our diabetic clinics have helped our patients with diabetes.'

'We're always looking at up-skilling our staff to improve our services in the future.'