emerge
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Creating an ME/CFS accessible healthcare practice

People with ME/CFS have a limited amount of energy to do the things they need to get done in a day. Helping them conserve their energy will reduce the impact of essential medical appointments.

This tip sheet encourages you to assess the accessibility of your practice for people with ME/CFS and other energy limiting conditions.

To aid energy conservation, provide:

- **Easy accessibility to the building** for mobility aids, and close parking to limit walking
- **Places to sit and lie down while waiting** - a chair at reception, couches, options for quiet areas close to consulting rooms, a spare room or a bed in the nurses' station. Some patients find waiting in the car and coming in when called allows them to recline - problems with prolonged sitting or standing (orthostatic intolerance) are common
- **Reduce sensory stimulation by reducing lighting and noise** - people with ME/CFS often experience increased sensitivity to light and sound and/or chemicals. Patients wearing sunglasses, masks or noise canceling devices should not be seen as displaying health anxiety
- **Remove/minimise perfumes/scented cleaning products** - multiple-chemical sensitivity is common for people with ME/CFS
- **Maintain an even, ambient temperature** - problems with adapting to hot or cold environments are common for people with ME/CFS

Before and during appointments:

- **Encourage the patient to bring a support person to their appointment if they wish**
- **If the patient is having word finding difficulties or has forgotten essential documents**, reassure them everything is OK and you understand ME/CFS can impact their cognitive function
- **Be open to having appointments recorded**, cognitive issues can affect information processing and recall
- **Provide a written summary of issues discussed during an appointment** and any further actions for the patient

Flexible delivery of care:

25% of people with ME/CFS are house or bed-bound. Fluctuating levels of impairment are also common and during a relapse. For these reasons, patients often require access to telehealth and/or home visits.

Patient services

Some specialist knowledge about ME/CFS will help you provide the best care to your patients:
- Doctors are familiar with administration and patient application forms for accessing financial and physical assistance.

You can contact our education unit to discuss continuing professional development: education@emerge.org.au

Patient Support and Information Service

Speak with our friendly team during business hours, Monday to Friday. Our team can provide you with information on ME/CFS and Long COVID and support you in navigating general health and community services. We can also answer common queries related to the programs and services provided by Emerge Australia.

Visit emerge.org.au or call 1800 865 321

www.emerge.org.au
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