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# Welcome!

Hi,

I'm Dr Samuel Markl, and I'm delighted to be welcoming you to my practice!

I know that establishing a therapeutic relationship with a new physician can sometimes be a tricky and uncertain time. I hope this letter helps to explain my background, approach and philosophy of practice.

First, a little about me. I am a Brit and newcomer to Canada. I completed my medical degree at Newcastle University in 2013. Since then, I have lived and worked in the north-east of England and have practiced as a family physician (GP) in my hometown since completing my postgraduate training in 2018.

I am excited to relocate to Toronto and to play my small part in helping its residents to live happier and healthier lives.

You may find that I "do things differently" than what you are used to. I ask that you keep an open mind in this regard. One of the great benefits of joining a new family practice is that you get a fresh look at your health and how it is maintained and managed.

## **My Approach to Your Health**

I believe in focusing on preventative care and supporting you to live a healthy, active lifestyle. Focusing efforts on aims such as quitting smoking, reducing alcohol intake, exercising, improving sleep and a healthy diet.

Alongside this I encourage evidence-based health promotion such as immunizations, cancer screening, and periodic health exams.

I view myself as your partner in health, offering evidence-based advice and empowering you to make informed decisions. I'll be transparent with you and explain options and potential limitations of testing and treatments. We'll strive for minimally invasive medicine, minimizing unnecessary interventions.

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I am pleased to be able to offer my skills and experience of practicing western medicine as an “expert generalist”. I have experience of providing continuity and holistic, person-centered care to patients of all ages.

I know that beyond this, some patients also seek the input of other healers and alternative medicine practitioners. In cases where I can understand and integrate their input with my own care, I will endeavor to do so. In some cases, I may find I am unable to accommodate requests for treatment/investigations beyond my scope, understanding and training as a family physician; in these cases, I may defer and encourage you to go back to the advising clinician.

As our understanding of medicine grows and changes over the years, so does our scope and role as family doctors. As more conditions are recognized, stigma reduced, and new treatments become available, more people are rightly seeking input for a variety of physical and mental health problems.

One of the challenges practicing as a family doctor is the pressure to “plug gaps” in provision of specialist assessment and diagnosis and act beyond your expertise. I am careful not to do this as I believe doing so is a disservice to patients who deserve to receive specialist assessment and the appropriate standard of care.

As such I am unable to offer an initial diagnosis of some conditions including ADHD, ASD and neurodiversity.

## **Respect, Diversity, and Appropriate Conduct**

I aim to provide an environment that affirms the diversity of the human condition. In my practice are patients of every sexual orientation, gender identity, ethnicity, ability, economic circumstance, and life history. I hope you feel welcome here no matter who you are.

Equally important, I have zero tolerance for any form of harassment, discrimination, or other unacceptable conduct towards me, my team, or other patients of the clinic; our policy is here.<sup>1</sup> I strive to treat individuals with respect and professionalism in all interactions, and I expect and require the same in return. This includes conduct whether in person, by phone, in writing, or by voicemail, and in circumstances of frustration or stress. I invite you to openly discuss with me any situations where I or my team fall short of these expectations.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.magentahealth.ca/zero-tolerance>

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## Communicating with the clinic and finding more information

Start at my personal landing page that you can access through our main page. The website has undergone a significant level of investment and is constantly being updated. It has been designed to help direct you to the right information at the right time, such as which type of appointment is appropriate or even to appropriate resources outside our practice, like the minor injuries clinic at MGH ER.

## Prescription Renewals

I typically aim to prescribe enough medication to last until your next appointment. I also try to “line up” long-term medications so that the prescriptions expire at the same time. Most of the time I will want to meet with you before renewing medications, as this is usually at an appropriate interval to re-evaluate your health. Please pay attention to your medications and plan ahead so that you do not run out, as I cannot get through all patient requests immediately. Please note that prescription refills without an appointment such as those faxed directly from the pharmacy will be charged \$20.

## Antibiotics

I only prescribe antibiotics for significant bacterial illnesses. For example, the common cold is caused by many viruses that give us symptoms of a sore throat, cough, stuffy or runny nose, and chest congestion. Antibiotics kill bacteria but not viruses; and thus, do not treat the common cold. In other words, I do not prescribe antibiotics for common colds or for other viral illnesses such as, for example, most cases of bronchitis (chest colds) or gastroenteritis (diarrhea), as antibiotics have significant side effects and may cause resistances that make it hard to treat any serious infections that do come up.

## Opioid and Sedative Medications

I rarely prescribe opioid medications for long-term use. These medications are appropriate treatments for acutely painful conditions but come with a high risk of side effects and addiction, especially if used long-term. I will not prescribe them just because you are already on these medications or they have been prescribed by another doctor. However, if you have been taking them chronically, we may need to taper you off them gradually and safely.

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If I do prescribe these medications, you will need to sign an opioid contract with me and participate in regular urine drug testing. Any breach of the contract would result in these medications being reduced, more tightly controlled, or stopped altogether. If you are suffering from an addiction to one or more substances, I can work with you and provide resources.

The same stipulations apply to two major classes of sedative medications: benzodiazepines (lorazepam, diazepam, clonazepam, alprazolam, etc.) and the “Z-drugs” (zopiclone, zolpidem, etc.). There are significant consequences to long-term use of these medications and the circumstances that warrant its use are exceedingly rare. If you are experiencing difficulties with sleep or anxiety, I would be happy to discuss this with you and find another solution.

## Booking an Appointment

Scheduling can be complicated, so it’s worth a quick discussion:

**How to Book:** All appointments are typically booked online through the Magenta Health website. Continue to book online as you always have. The team will seamlessly transition you from Dr. Park’s practice to mine.

**Appointment Length:** Most appointments will be scheduled for 15 minutes. Knowing the reason for your appointment helps me plan for the visit. Sometimes, we will not be able to address all your health concerns in one visit. At the beginning of each appointment, we will come up with a list of the concerns you’d like to address and we will prioritize the issues we should and can address in the limited time we have. Rushing through multiple problems is not safe or effective. In some instances, follow-up appointments will be necessary, which if nothing else, will allow me to get to know you and your health better.

**Wait Times:** To respect the time and schedule of my patients, I work hard to stay on time or close to it. You can help by arriving slightly early for your appointment; unfortunately, you might need to reschedule if you arrive late. At the same time, occasionally a patient emergency may arise or I may end up running late due to a series of unexpectedly complex appointments. When scheduling, please give yourself some buffer time just in case.

**Reserved Appointments for Urgent Matters:** I will keep some appointments in my schedule each day for urgent appointments that can be booked within 24-54 hours. These are for urgent

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issues only. Please respect your fellow patients by not booking a last minute appointment for a non-urgent issue. Please also note that Magenta Health is not a walk-in clinic.

As with all the physicians at Magenta Health, I am also part of the after hours care team. We take turns working these evening and weekend shifts. Therefore, you may see a different doctor during these appointments. These appointments can be booked online 24 - 54 hours in advance via my own booking page. Again, please respect your fellow patients, and reserve these appointments for urgent issues only.

## Non-Insured Services

OHIP covers most, but not all, medical treatments and services. Some common examples of uninsured services include forms for school, work or insurance purposes; sick notes; Driver's Physicals; cosmetic procedures (e.g. skin tag removal, some wart treatments); TB skin testing; and some blood tests. You are responsible for the payment of these services. The fee schedule for common services can be found here.<sup>2</sup>

## Forms

If you have a form to be filled out, please indicate that when you book your appointment and bring printed copies of the form to your appointment. Please make sure that you fill out in advance all the sections that are "to be filled out by the applicant," including signing the document if applicable. Some forms are quite simple, but others cannot be filled out at the time of the visit. Usually, forms will be filled out within 1-2 weeks, but it depends on the form. Please allow plenty of time for me to complete your forms. If I do not have enough information about your condition to complete the form, I may request a specialist's opinion first. Completing forms and writing notes are not insured services, so there are charges as outlined above.

## Visiting Walk-in Clinics

Use of walk-in clinics is discussed here.<sup>3</sup> The clinic and its family physicians, including myself, are penalized when patients visit walk-in clinics, so please try to minimize the use of them. More importantly, it is in your best interest that your health records are kept in one place so that I have access to the most accurate information. I cannot see what was discussed at walk-in clinics, and they can't see your chart at Magenta Health, meaning they would not have information that

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<sup>2</sup><https://www.magentahealth.ca/online-booking-link-retrieval-mag88?query=uninsured%20fees>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.magentahealth.ca/walk-in-discussion>

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may be important for making medical decisions. Additionally, if tests are ordered by the walk-in physician, the results likely will not come to my attention, nor will I necessarily have access to them; this can have a negative impact on your care. It is why we provide urgent same-day and after hours appointments to provide you accessible, safe, and effective medical care.

## **Summary**

I recognize this is a lot of information to digest!

This information is provided to help us be on the same page right at the beginning, rather than run into misunderstandings later, so that we can focus on what's important: your health.

I look forward to getting to know you.

Sincerely,

**Dr. Samuel Markl**