Pleural Disease

- Diseases primarily affecting the pleural space include Pneumothorax and Pleural Effusion
- Pleural effusions can occur as a result of a number of intra and extra-thoracic diseases including malignancy, infection (including TB), pulmonary embolism, autoimmune disease, heart failure, and liver disease

Information Required

- Symptoms (local and systemic)
- Smoking history
- Asbestos exposure history
- Drug history
- Known past/current malignancies
- Co-morbidities (particularly connective tissue disease, cardiac disease, liver disease)

Investigations Required

- Full blood count, Electrolytes, LFTs, CRP, Coags
- SaO2
- CXR
- CTPA or CT chest with contrast if PE/malignancy suspected

Fax Referrals to

FMC Outpatient Clinic     Fax: (08) 8204 6105 (Clinic B)
Noarlunga GP Plus         Fax: (08) 8384 9711

Red Flags – Requiring urgent review

Prompting consideration of other diagnosis, particularly malignancy

- Abrupt onset of symptoms (pain, breathlessness), particularly if known Emphysema or recent chest trauma
- Features of infection/sepsis with persistent pleural effusion
- Lung/pleural mass on imaging
- Unilateral pleural effusion

Suggested GP Management

- Withhold anticoagulant/antiplatelet therapy pending pleural fluid sampling
- Cease any medications which could cause pleural effusion
- Trial diuretics if effusion likely transudate (history of left ventricular failure, hypoalbuminaemia) particularly if bilateral effusions present
- Do not attempt pleural fluid sampling without ultrasound guidance

Clinical Resources

- Asbestos Diseases Research Institute mesothelioma guideline http://www.pneumotox.com/


General Information to assist with referrals and the Referral templates for FMC and Noarlunga GP Plus are available to download from the SALHN Outpatient Services website www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/SALHNoutpatients.