

Immediate Release

Allied Health Professionals: the third pillar in Australia's health system

23 November, 2009

The President of Allied Health Professions Australia, Carol Mioduchowski called on the government today to guarantee that allied health professionals be equal partners in all areas of the Australia's new design of our health system.

“We have a once in a lifetime opportunity to design new models of healthcare delivery as the reform process moves to the next stage. Allied Health professionals must play an active role in primary care as part of the three pronged approach: medical practitioners, nurses and allied health professionals,” said Ms Mioduchowski.

“Allied Health professionals need to have a voice at all levels of the new system from governance roles in Primary Health Care Organisations, development of health care funding models to workforce systems and planning,” said Ms Mioduchowski.

“Consumers must be given the choice so they can visit the right practitioner in the right place and at the right time to receive optimal health outcomes in the new health system currently being developed by the Rudd Government,” she said.

Current limitations for public patients, who are required to obtain a GP referral to claim Medicare rebate for all allied health practitioner visits, costs the Australian taxpayer vast amounts of money.

Direct access to allied health professionals by patients will ease the pressure on general practitioners and provide consumers with specific health care across the system that ranges from prevention to intervention and treatment to chronic disease management.

Allied Health Professions Australia (AHPA) Executive Officer, Professor Lyn Littlefield said, “The government's reform proposals amount to redesigning the primary health care system which is essential for the future requirements of users”.

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Members: Audiological Society of Australia, Australasian Podiatry Council, Australian Association for Exercise and Sports Science, Australian Association of Social Workers, Australian Institute of Radiography, Australian Orthotic and Prosthetic Association, Australian Psychological Society, Australian Sonographers Association, Chiropractors' Association of Australia, Dietitians Association of Australia, OT AUSTRALIA, Services for Australian Rural and Remote Allied Health Inc, Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia, Speech Pathology Australia, The Orthoptic Association of Australia.

Associates: Australian Diabetes Educators Association.

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“Everyone involved in the health care system has to make a long-term commitment to ensure the reform process happens at all services levels to benefit patients. This means commitment to the process from the federal and state governments, consumers and all healthcare professionals to make it work for everyone,” said Professor Littlefield.

“Working together, medical and allied health professionals and nurses, we can bring about real change to develop a community health interdisciplinary service delivery,” said Prof Littlefield.

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Attached: AHPA Guiding Principles & Criteria for Australia’s new health system

AHPA **Guiding Principles** for a new design of the health system

- Allied Health must play a key role in the design of the health system and must be an integral component of governance, funding models, innovation in education and training, research and evaluation of health systems and workforce, models of care, and involved at all levels in the implementation of new primary care models
- Allied Health professionals work across the consumer care continuum: health promotion, prevention, early identification, intervention and treatment, and management of health conditions
- Consumers must have equity of access to the *right practitioner*, in the *right place* and at the *right time* for optimal consumer health outcomes

Allied Health Professionals*, under the new healthcare framework, are well positioned to deliver services that produce optimal health outcomes and seamless pathways for consumers between hospitals, emergency departments, sub-acute care and primary care.

AHPA – **Criteria** for a new design of our health system

1. Health reform requires the establishment of a Primary Health Care Taskforce (comprising allied health, consumers, medical professionals and nurses) which is responsible to the Minister to oversee the implementation of the new system
2. Governance structures of new Primary Health Care Organisations must include allied health and consumers reflecting collaborative care to produce optimal health outcomes
3. Primary Health Care Centres must deliver local solutions to meet local needs that are community based and deliver interdisciplinary care
4. Funding models must meet consumer needs. Allied Health must be involved in flexible funding models
5. Consumer access to health services must be appropriately funded. Consumers must be funded to have direct access to allied health professionals through easy and affordable mechanisms
6. All Allied Health professions must be engaged in the development and implementation of seamless ehealth systems to support appropriate health care
7. All health professionals must promote and value all areas of expertise and ‘scopes of practice’
8. Funding is required for additional allied health workforce to meet the needs of the community
9. Equity of access to allied health services must be provided in regional, rural and remote areas, and for veterans and indigenous peoples
10. Increased funding must be allocated for training, education and clinical placements to ensure a skilled future healthcare workforce
11. Health system reform must be underpinned by evidence and evaluation

**Note: Allied Health Professionals means registered, partly registered and/or self regulated health practitioners*