

# AMA SURVEY OF GP ATTITUDES TO FEDERAL GOVERNMENT REFORMS TO THE FUNDING OF CARE FOR PATIENTS WITH DIABETES

## **BACKGROUND**

The AMA conducted an online survey of 487 GPs to seek their feedback on the Government's planned changes to the way that the provision of care to patients with diabetes will be funded. The survey was conducted from 25 June 2010 through until 2 July 2010.

From 1 July 2012, diabetic patients will be given the opportunity to voluntarily enrol with a nominated general practice. Under the Government's new scheme, the AMA understands that:

- Practices will receive \$950 a year for each enrolled diabetic patient, which is intended to cover the costs of all day-to-day GP care received at the practice;
- The above payment will be in place of existing Medicare rebates for patients;
- Practices will also be eligible for a one-off payment of \$1500 when they agree to participate in the program, as well as an annual enrolment payment of \$100 for each enrolled patient;
- Practices will receive annual bonus payments if they achieve yet to be determined benchmarks; and
- Allied health services will be organised by the Government's new "Medicare Locals", which will receive \$250 a year for each diabetic patient that is enrolled at the patient's nominated general practice.

GPs were asked questions about current Medicare arrangements for patients with complex and chronic disease and how they could be improved upon. They were also asked for their views on what impact the Government's planned changes on the provision of care to patients with diabetes would have.

## **SNAPSHOT OF RESULTS**

### **Location of respondents**

State/Territory	% of respondents	State/Territory	% of respondents
ACT	1.2%	NSW	25.9%
NT	0.6%	Qld	22.4%
SA	9.4%	Tas	4.3%
Victoria	21.1%	WA	15.0%

Urban	Outer Urban	Regional	Rural/Remote
45%	17%	21%	16%

### **Do current Medicare arrangements provide adequate support for patients with complex and chronic disease?**

The survey allowed GPs to rate current Medicare arrangements on a scale of one through to ten, with ten being the highest rating, in terms of the support they provided to patients with complex and chronic disease.

Fifty per cent of GPs gave the current Medicare a score of seven or above.

### **How could current Medicare arrangements be improved to better support the provision of care to patients with complex and chronic disease?**

In order of priority, GPs were asked to rank a number of different proposals that would support improved provision of care to patients with complex and chronic disease.

Using a formula that weighted responses according to priority, the survey showed that GPs believe that cutting red tape should be the number one priority for policy makers, followed by the introduction of more streamlined arrangements for GPs to refer their patients to allied health professionals. The list of priorities, in order, is detailed below.

1. Cut the red tape requirements for Medicare chronic disease items
2. Introduce streamlined arrangements in Medicare chronic disease items for GPs to refer patients to allied health services
3. Abolish current Medicare chronic disease items in favour of better funding for longer consultations (Medicare level C&D items)
4. Increase patient rebates for Medicare chronic disease items.

### **Will the Government's new scheme be an improvement on existing Medicare arrangements?**

GPs were asked whether or not the Government's new scheme for diabetes care would support improved care for patients when compared to existing Medicare arrangements. They provided the following responses.

<b>Response</b>	<b>Percentage of responses</b>
Unsure	14.0%
No, it is likely to make it more difficult to access GP care	61.0%
No, it won't make much change at all	22.8%
Yes, it will improve on existing Medicare arrangements	2.3%

### **Will the Government's new scheme support GPs to spend more time with patients?**

Research commissioned by the AMA earlier this year showed that patients want to be supported to spend more time with GPs. GPs were asked what impact the Government's planned changes would have on the time they would be able to spend with their patients.

<b>Response</b>	<b>Percentage of responses</b>
Unsure	13%
Likely to result in less time	59%
Likely to result in more time	2%
Unlikely to make any difference	26%

### **Do GPs support voluntary patient enrolment?**

The Government's plan will allow eligible patients to enrol with a general practice that will coordinate the patient's care. GPs were asked whether or not they supported voluntary patient enrolment, with eighty-eight per cent saying that they did not support this.

### **Will GPs agree to be part of the Government's new scheme for diabetes care?**

GPs were asked if they would agree to participate in the new scheme when it is implemented and they provided the following responses.

<b>Response</b>	<b>Percentage of responses</b>
Unsure	32%
No, I will not participate	64%
Yes, I will participate	4%

### **Do GPs think the medical profession was adequately consulted about the Government's planned scheme?**

GPs were asked if they felt that the Government had consulted adequately with the profession in the development of its planned scheme. Ninety eight per cent said that they did not feel that the medical profession had been adequately consulted.

### **How does the Government's scheme compare the AMA's alternative plan?**

Earlier this year, the AMA released a comprehensive plan to improve care for patients with complex and chronic disease. GPs were asked to rate the Government's scheme against the AMA's plan. Ninety one per cent of GPs rated the AMA's plan as being superior to the scheme now being introduced by the Government.