



AUSTRALIAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION
(SOUTH AUSTRALIA) INC.
ABN 91 028 693 268

PHARMACY PRESCRIBING A DANGEROUS EXPERIMENT WITH WOMEN'S HEALTH

Allowing pharmacists to prescribe medication for UTIs will increase the risk of more health complications that will send women to EDs for care, AMA(SA) President Dr John Williams said today.

Dr Williams was commenting after today's release of the 'Final Report of the Select Committee on Access to Urinary Tract Infection Treatment'.

The report recommends that pharmacists in South Australia be allowed to treat 'uncomplicated UTIs', as they now can in Queensland, NSW, the ACT, Victoria and WA.

'But there's nothing "uncomplicated" about a UTI,' Dr Williams said.

'As we told this committee, and our colleagues have told similar forums interstate, the limited discussion a pharmacist can have when a woman presents with UTI symptoms will not ascertain whether a woman has an "uncomplicated" UTI – or if it's a UTI at all.'

Dr Williams is available for interviews at the AMA(SA) offices at 175 Fullarton Road, Dulwich, at 11 am today.

Dr Williams said figures released in Queensland this week show there has been a dramatic increase in women presenting to EDs with UTIs since pharmacists could prescribe treatments for what they diagnose as UTIs after a brief discussion with a patient.

He said the AMA(SA) submission to the South Australian review pointed to mounting evidence in Queensland that women were being prescribed antibiotics for presumed UTIs and later needed treatment for other conditions, including pregnancies and cancer.

Of the women who went to pharmacists seeking assistance, 97% were prescribed antibiotics.

'We will have women being given antibiotics when they don't need them, when growing resistance to antibiotics is described by the World Health Organization as one of the biggest threats to global health and development,' Dr Williams said.

'Women will come to GPs with increasing numbers of health conditions, and GPs won't have anything effective to give them.'

Dr Williams said some of the 29 recommendations in the report reflect and in part address the concerns of AMA(SA) and individual clinicians regarding how pharmacy prescribing will be implemented in practice, including in relation to patient privacy and access to records.

'We thank committee chair Ms Jayne Stinson and the committee for listening to our concerns, which are evidence-based and reflect our clinical experience of what UTIs can mean for a woman and her health outcomes,' Dr Williams said.

'Overall, though, we're disappointed with the report. It is also worrying that the final recommendations call for pharmacy prescribing of other medications, including the Pill. This week, the Queensland Government announced plans to allow pharmacists to extend their scope of practice into performing lung exams and other procedures without the appropriate training.

'These moves are supposedly to help women access care because it's difficult to access GP care. We're also facing the imposition of payroll tax, which we have told the Treasurer will cripple general practice.

'More than ever, it seems that the state governments don't understand what general practice does. We are the backbone of the health system and we keep people out of EDs and out of hospitals.

'We want to be capitalise on Australian Government funding for general practice and strengthening Medicare, and build thriving practices incorporating nurse practitioners, pharmacists and other allied health professionals to help our patients access care and improve their health.'

For more information or interview requests please contact Karen Phillips at AMA(SA) on 0402 103 451.