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GPs COULD HOLD CURE FOR QLD'S HEALTH BURDEN

Almost \$630 million¹ could be saved from the Queensland health budget if people simply visited their GP yearly, according to AMA Queensland.

AMA Queensland President Dr Chris Zappala said more than 130,000 hospital visits a year were avoidable² and that a greater focus on prevention and early intervention led by the State's GPs was urgently needed.

"The average cost of a hospital visit is close to \$5,000³, so cutting the number of people admitted to hospital would have a huge impact on the budget bottom line," Dr Zappala said.

"Many admissions for chronic illnesses such as diabetes and heart disease – and even for some acute conditions – could be avoided if Queenslanders took the simple step of seeing their GP for an annual check-up."

AMA Queensland has launched a new campaign with Brisbane North PHN to make Queenslanders aware of the value of a regular visit to their GP.

"It's a fact that people who regularly see their GP enjoy better health for longer," Dr Zappala said.

"A GP who knows you and your medical background is more likely to pick up problems at an early stage, before they become serious."

Brisbane North PHN CEO Abbe Anderson said GPs had an important role to play in keeping people well.

"Doctors know the health system inside-out and will help navigate through the myriad of treatments and therapies on offer – from vaccinations and weight loss to counselling and everything in between," Ms Anderson said.

Brisbane GP Dr Matt Young, whose practice is based in the western suburb of Inala, said one of the best things about his work was getting to know his patients.

"Inala is very multicultural, so I love being able to talk to my patients about where they're from. It helps me relate to them on a deeper level than just being their doctor," he said.

"Everyone needs a GP they can talk to."

Dr Beres Wenck, who has been a GP in Brisbane inner city suburb Milton for almost 40 years, agreed.

"Some of my patients have been with me since I started this practice. Knowing them so well gives me a much better understanding of their overall health and lets me identify problems early," Dr Wenck said.

FAST FACTS:

Cost of GP visit	\$37.05 ⁴
Cost of average hospital stay (Qld)	\$4693.95 ⁵
Total number of hospitalisations (Qld)	2,071,130 ⁶
Number of potentially avoidable hospitalisations (Qld)*	133,986 ⁷

* Potentially avoidable hospitalisations are defined as those that might have been avoided by timely and effective primary health care, including preventative measures.

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¹ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2015, *Admitted patient care 2013-2014: Australian hospital statistics*.

² *ibid.*

³ *ibid.*

⁴ Cost of Level B consultation under Medicare Benefits Schedule.

⁵ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2015, *Admitted patient care 2013-2014: Australian hospital statistics*.

⁶ *ibid.*

⁷ *ibid.*