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**BUPA PHARMACY PARTNERSHIP UNDERMINES QUALITY
 GENERAL PRACTICE**

AMA President, Tony Bartone, today slammed a new ‘strategic partnership’ between Bupa, one of Australia’s largest health insurers, and TerryWhite Chemmart pharmacies as an attack on general practice that could lead to patients receiving inappropriate primary health care and advice.

The new partnership claims to offer Bupa customers ‘*a range of health services and benefits*’ and ‘*a health app aimed at providing significant value and personalised care*’.

Dr Bartone said that the best and safest place for people to access quality primary health care and advice is the local community general practice from highly trained and experienced GPs.

“General practice is the foundation of quality primary health care in Australia, and any threats to undermine it or replace it with inferior models of care must be rejected,” Dr Bartone said.

“It is outrageous that a large health insurer like Bupa would endeavour to undermine general practice, especially after a thorough Government review of private health insurance to ensure that policyholders received high quality and value for money for their significant investment in insurance.

“This partnership will fragment quality primary health care and put further question marks over the value of private health insurance – just as radical new reforms are being implemented.”

Dr Bartone said that the AMA will be asking Bupa exactly what health services they will be offering under this arrangement, and question why there has been no consultation with the AMA and the medical profession about this potentially dangerous initiative.

“Pharmacies marketing unnecessary and expensive pathology tests and other ‘health screening’ services to their customers is a push to increase profits at the expense of evidence-based, cost-effective health care,” Dr Bartone said.

“These activities are not within the scope of practice of a pharmacist.

“Pharmacies in the community play an important role in providing medicines information to the public, and ensuring that all Australians have access to medicines in a timely and safe manner.

“But doctors are the only health professionals trained to fully assess a person, initiate further investigations, make a diagnosis, and understand and recommend the full range of clinically appropriate treatments for a given condition.

“Health checks, screening activities, and diagnostic tests should only be conducted if they are clinically indicated, backed by evidence, and cost effective. Unnecessary ‘health checks’ are costly for patients and can cause needless concern.

“There is no doubt that hiving off certain aspects of health care, such as screening and pathology ordering, only duplicates effort and fragments care.

“This Bupa partnership is an insult to GPs and a dud deal for Bupa customers,” Dr Bartone said.

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