

**Australian Medical Association Limited**  
**ABN 37 008 426 793**

42 Macquarie Street, Barton ACT 2600: PO Box 6090, Kingston ACT 2604  
 Telephone: (02) 6270 5400 Facsimile (02) 6270 5499  
 Website : <http://www.ama.com.au/>



**SUPER SONIC DECISION TO WITHDRAW FROM PHARMACY  
 PATHOLOGY - AMA**

AMA President, Dr Michael Gannon, said today that the decision by Sonic Healthcare to withdraw from pharmacy-based screening programs was in the best interests of patients.

Dr Gannon said the pharmacy pathology model is wrong on many levels.

“The primary health care system in Australia is built on a medical model of life-long continuity of care, preferably with a usual GP or general practice. This is the model being championed by the Government with its Health Care Homes trial.

“Fragmenting care by allowing non-medical health professionals to attempt to do the work of highly trained doctors is dangerous and irresponsible.

“It puts the health of patients at risk, and it increases the out-of pocket health costs for families.

“The pharmacy screening tests can cost between \$25 and \$220, with no rebate under the Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) for the patient.

“It takes years of training and specialised clinical judgement to determine whether a patient needs a pathology test, and to interpret and manage the test outcome. That is work best done by a GP.

“Health checks, screening activities, and diagnostic tests should only be conducted if they are clinically indicated, backed by evidence, and cost effective. They must benefit patients and not incur unnecessary costs. GPs are best placed to make these decisions.

“The AMA acknowledges the highly valued and specialised role that pharmacists play in the health system, and the collaborative role they have with their local GPs.

“But the health system – and the health budget – are best served when all health professionals operate within their scope of practice to provide the best possible care for patients,” Dr Gannon said.

Dr Gannon said the AMA encourages corporate pharmacy groups to follow the responsible lead taken by Sonic.

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CONTACT:     John Flannery                     02 6270 5477 / 0419 494 761  
                   Maria Hawthorne                 02 6270 5478 / 0427 209 753

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