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**IMPROVING COMMUNICATION BETWEEN HEALTH SERVICES  
 AND DOCTORS**

The AMA has released a new Guide, which sets out 10 minimum standards that should apply for communication between health services and general practitioners and other treating doctors to ensure the best possible health outcomes for patients.

The Guide, *10 Minimum Standards for Communicating between Health Services and General Practitioners and other Treating Doctors*, which has been adapted from an AMA Victoria document, provides key criteria for communication that can improve quality of care for patients, and also reduce duplication and waste in the health system.

The AMA has written to all State and Territory Health Departments, and the major operators of private hospitals, urging them to use the new standards to inform the development of policy and to improve the standards of care being provided to patients.

AMA Vice President, Dr Tony Bartone, a Melbourne GP, said today that the AMA Guide encourages all health care providers and institutions to share the responsibility for improved communication across the whole patient journey.

“The Guide covers the patient journey from the community setting to treatment in a hospital or healthcare facility and return to the community – including clinical handover back to the patient’s general practitioner,” Dr Bartone said.

“Improving the communication between all the different providers in the health system can help to reduce re-admissions and minimise adverse events.

“More effective communication delivers improvements in satisfaction and experience for patients, carers, families, doctors, and other health practitioners.”

Dr Bartone said the development of the AMA Guide was led by GPs, who are often frustrated by the lack of timely information or inadequate information about their patient’s progress in the health system.

“GPs are the key coordinators of patient care, monitoring and managing their care and treatment. Any disruption to clear communication channels can have an adverse effect on patients,” Dr Bartone said.

“We are delivering very good outcomes for patients in the Australian health system, but we can and should do better. We are confident that the AMA Guide will contribute to improved communication and, in turn, better overall care.”

The AMA Guide covers vital criteria such as the timeliness of communication and its content; communication processes; the interface with practice software systems; good quality referrals, better discharge processes, and secure electronic communication systems.

The work undertaken by AMA Victoria has been well received in that State. The AMA believes the Guide can now play a similar role in driving quality improvement nationally.

The Guide is at <https://ama.com.au/article/10-minimum-standards-communication>

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