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Transcript: AMA President, Dr Tony Bartone, ABC Radio, *AM with Sabra Lane*, Tuesday, 27 August 2019

Subject: Changes to pharmacy ownership laws

SABRA LANE: Another turf war has erupted between doctors and pharmacists, this time over whether GPs should be allowed to own chemist shops. Doctors are lobbying the Federal Government to allow the change, but the peak pharmacy body warns it would create an American-style system rife with conflicts of interest.

Gavin Coote reports.

GAVIN COOTE: Every five years, a Community Pharmacy Agreement is thrashed out to govern the sector. The Federal Health Minister, Greg Hunt, has promised to have the next deal finalised by the end of the year, and both pharmacists and doctors have drawn up a long wish list.

TONY BARTONE: We're asking for a seat at that table to ensure that patients' views, when it comes to access, convenience, and improved health outcomes, are reflected in the terms of that Agreement.

GAVIN COOTE: Tony Bartone is the President of the Australian Medical Association. Along with the Royal Australian College of GPs, it wants doctors to be allowed to own a pharmacy too. Tony Bartone says bringing medical and pharmacy services under the one roof would improve access to cheaper medicines, especially in regional areas.

TONY BARTONE: So, we're just trying to emulate what we know is best practice around the world and occurs in our hospitals right now, and puts it in the hands of our patients in general practice in primary health care.

GAVIN COOTE: But the pharmacy sector adamantly opposes the intrusion.

[Excerpt – Pharmacy Guild President George Tambassis]

GAVIN COOTE: But AMA President, Tony Bartone, believes ultimately the change will improve the lives of patients.

TONY BARTONE: Unfortunately, the comments by the Guild are influenced only by trying to protect the anti-competitive practices that have remained in practice for far too long. In terms of all aspects of access, convenience, and improved health outcomes the patient, the community will be the winner here.

SABRA LANE: AMA President, Tony Bartone, ending Gavin Coote's report.

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