

## Key Issues

Primary health care (PHC) is the front line of the health care system and usually the first level of contact of individuals, the family and community with the Australian health system.

It is scientifically sound, universally accessible and constitutes the basis for a continuing health care process. It provides comprehensive, coordinated and ongoing care by a suitably trained workforce comprised of multi-disciplinary teams supported by an integrated referral systems.

General practice is the cornerstone of successful primary health care, which underpins population health outcomes and is key to ensuring we have a high-quality, equitable and sustainable health system into the future.

However, the current funding model is not sustainable to support quality health care into the future. In particular, the gap between the rebate value and service value is growing (which means patients are paying more for their care) due to chronic underfunding of general practice services over the past decade.

## Patient consideration

The role of the GP is increasingly important as the population ages and the burden of chronic disease grows, requiring continuing long-term care for patients.

GPs are managing more problems in each consultation than they did a decade ago as patients, particularly older patients, present with multiple reasons for the encounter. GPs are also spending more time with patients and manage the vast majority of the problems presented to them.

With Australia's growing and ageing population, this trend is set to continue. Yet funding for general practice is not keeping up with this trend. This will have a significant impact on the quality of care that practices are able to provide.

## Government consideration

The key to successful long-term health reform is to properly fund and invest in primary care, especially general practice.

Quality general practice adopts the Quadruple Aim Framework, an approach to optimising health system performance by:

1. pursuing improvements in population health,
2. enhancing the patient experience of care,
3. reducing the per capita cost to the health care system, and
4. improving the work life of health care providers.

While the AMA's proposed immediate measures will provide much-needed support for general practice in the short term, a long-term funding plan (based on the Quadruple Aim Framework) is required to transform general practice into high performing patient-centred medical homes.

This transformation is necessary to ensure general practice can rise to the challenge of delivering quality patient-centred and cost-effective care. This will reduce patients' need for more complex, high-cost health care, particularly to those with chronic diseases or at risk of developing chronic disease.

## AMA position

The AMA calls on the major parties to commit to working with the profession to design and implement a more robust long-term funding model for general practice, which builds on existing fee-for-service arrangements and enables patients to access improved care in the community.

For further information on this issue please contact Nick Elmitt on 02 6270 5400 or [nelmitt@ama.com.au](mailto:nelmitt@ama.com.au)