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MEDIA RELEASE

New partnership to support Western Australians living with chronic disease

An innovative care model with the potential to help Western Australians living with chronic conditions live healthier and longer lives has launched in WA. The model is delivered through a unique partnership between the WA Primary Health Alliance (WAPHA) and two of Australia's largest private health insurers.

CareFirst is a six-month behaviour change program for people recently diagnosed with long term chronic conditions like chronic heart failure, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, osteoarthritis, type 2 diabetes or cardiovascular disease. It will be delivered in selected locations across metropolitan and regional Western Australia.

Participants, who will be invited to participate by their GP, will be provided with a personalised care plan; health coaching and extensive support to help them manage their condition, improve their quality of life and stay out of hospital.

The partnership will see around 2,500 participants, including around 1,200 public patients, 800 Medibank members and 500 HBF members, enrolled in the program through their GP.

Dr Neda Meshgin from the Canning Vale Medical Centre said she was pleased to be trialling the approach.

"I really believe CareFirst will improve the quality of life of my patients with chronic health conditions and help them achieve their life goals."

"It's an evidence based, patient centric program that adds to the work I am already doing for my patients. I can draw on the expertise of our team of practice nurses who are passionate about health promotion and who already have a close therapeutic relationship with the patients."

"It's the first program that I see as a win win for everyone - patient, doctor and health insurance fund provider," said Dr Meshgin.

WAPHA Chief Executive Officer Learne Durrington welcomed the opportunity to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of primary care services for patients, particularly those at risk of poor health outcomes.

"With almost half of potentially avoidable hospitalisations being for chronic conditions, CareFirst will help people receive the right care in the right place at the right time. With GPs at the heart of this program, we are expecting strong engagement from people with these conditions."

HBF's Executive General Manager of Health and Wellness, Jennifer Solitario, continued, "HBF is always open to innovative models like CareFirst that can help improve members' quality of life and drive health costs down. The number of Western Australians living with chronic disease is increasing exponentially every year, and we are seeing people present with these illnesses earlier in life. The compound effect of this is unprecedented pressure

on our health costs and any change we can make is only going to be a win for the whole community.”

Medibank General Manager Member Health, Rebecca Bell, said the potential of the program has been buoyed by positive preliminary results of a pilot undertaken in Queensland.

“Participants recorded improvements in their blood pressure and weight and, most importantly, a decrease in their risk of hospitalisation,” Ms Bell said.

“We are excited to deliver CareFirst with our partners and work with GPs to help people live healthier lives”.

The partnership between WA Primary Health Alliance, Medibank Private and HBF commenced in December 2016 and concludes in February 2018. The program will be independently evaluated to assess its success in improving the participant’s health status and risk of future hospitalisations.

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