



WAPHA
WA Primary Health Alliance

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PERTH NORTH, PERTH SOUTH,
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An Australian Government Initiative

Media Release

GP report card flags need for health sector integration

19 September 2017

WA Primary Health Alliance (WAPHA) welcomes the release of *General Practice: Health of a Nation 2017*, a benchmark report highlighting the critical role of GPs in preventative health care and keeping people mentally and physically well and out of hospital.

According to the report's authors, the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, mental health concerns, such as depression and anxiety, are now the most common conditions seen by GPs, with 61 per cent of GPs recording this as the main reason for a patient's visit.

While GPs flagged mental health as the health issue causing most concern for the future, other emerging concerns include diabetes, obesity and ageing.

WAPHA chief executive officer Learne Durrington said while it is gratifying to note that people are accessing GPs regularly, trust their family GP and can get appointments readily, the report confirmed GPs are facing increasing challenges.

"Their patient profile is becoming more complex, due to an ageing population, more people with multiple illnesses and more people with one or more chronic conditions. On top of this, there's a growing trend towards treating more people in the community.

"Thanks to a growing body of evidence that informs the efficacy of treating people in the community, we are seeing improved health outcomes when health care and social support are designed around and delivered in a community by the health professionals who know the person, their family and their circumstances best.

"However, GPs need our support to respond to this changing landscape and WAPHA is firmly focused on addressing their needs as well as those of their patients, particularly those with complex conditions such as mental illness and chronic disease, which often go hand in hand.

"Rather than simply adding more of what we already have, this calls for a new way of thinking and doing that places the patient at the centre of their care with all the moving parts of the health sector working as one to achieve the best health outcomes.

"In WA, the State Government's Sustainable Health Review is a significant opportunity to effect such a system change and build a stronger, more cohesive health system," Ms Durrington said.

WAPHA is already making headway by commissioning a number of innovative services for people with mental health concerns and chronic disease conditions with integration as a core principle.



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“At the heart of this whole-of-system integrated approach is improving capacity and capability in primary care and general practice because we need GPs to be working at the top of their scope and free them up to focus on dealing with patients, not paperwork,” Ms Durrington said.

In order to achieve this, WAPHA is supporting general practice to allow them to deliver the best possible service for their patients in the most efficient and effective way.

This includes general system improvements, skills-based education and training, data-driven quality improvements, enabling digital health solutions and developing resources to help refer patients appropriately.

Other initiatives are underway to improve access to primary care for vulnerable groups and build the capacity of GPs and communities to deal with mental health, particularly as first responders and local support systems for people experiencing anxiety and depression.

The full report is available here: <http://www.racgp.org.au/yourracgp/news/general-practice-health-of-the-nation>

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About WAPHA: WAPHA oversees the strategic commissioning functions of the Perth North, Perth South and Country WA Primary Health Networks (PHNs). The WA PHNs are three of 31 PHNs established by the Australian Government nationally to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of health services for the community. We work across the WA healthcare system with doctors, allied health professionals, Area Health Services and service providers to improve the coordination of care for people who are at risk of poor health outcomes. For more information, visit www.wapha.org.au