



# **NEWS RELEASE**

**Australian Divisions of General Practice Ltd.**

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## **NURSES TO DELIVER REGIONAL PAP TESTS**

Nurses in rural and regional GPs practices will now be able to do pap tests as a result of a new Medicare item number introduced this month.

Kate Carnell, Chief Executive Officer of the Australian Divisions of General Practice, say the new system will result in women in rural and remote locations having increased access to female health practitioners.

“It is less likely for a woman living in regional Australia to be able to access a female GP,” Ms Carnell says.

“As a result of this measure, women who were previously not prepared to visit a male GP for a pap test are now more likely to have the test done.”

General practice nurses are already performing 15 percent of all pap tests in rural and remote GPs surgeries. Ms Carnell says we will see the role of the general practice nurse continue to expand as the ageing Australian population results in a shortage of GPs long term.

“General practice nurses are already able to perform immunisations and wound care in metropolitan and remote areas,” Ms Carnell says. “This is a logical expansion of their role.”

### More information:

- General practice nurses undertake specific training in accredited programs in order to perform pap tests
- The patient's GP will receive the results of the test regardless of whether the GP or the nurse does the procedure.
- The patient does not need to see the GP first – can book directly with the nurse.
- Patients are able to claim a Medicare rebate for this service just as they do after visiting the GP. The practice can also elect to bulk bill for this service.
- Cervical cancer resulted in 227 deaths in 2002. Pap smear screening has been very successful in reducing the incidence and death of women from cervical cancer (Aust Institute of Health and Welfare, 2004).
- A pap smear checks for changes in the cells of the cervix. It is a simple screening procedure to find early warning signs that cancer might develop in the future. It only takes a few minutes but it can save your life.(Cervical Screening Australia).
- All women over 18 years of age who have ever had sex should have a pap smear every two years (Cervical Screening Australia).

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