



NEWS RELEASE

Australian Divisions of General Practice Ltd.

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Lateral solutions needed to address medical workforce shortages

Australian Divisions of General Practice (ADGP) Chair Dr Rob Walters says research published in the *Medical Journal of Australia* warning of a major medical workforce shortage in the next 20 years points to the need for "lateral solutions" to chronic and systematic problems within the health care sector.

"It is not news to most people in the sector that we are facing increased shortages despite some of the changes that have been made. ADGP has been ringing the medical workforce alarm bell for some time," Dr Walters said.

"We know that the average GP is over 50, and that younger GPs – now mostly female – are more interested in part-time work or reduced hours than the previous generation of GPs. It is clear from these facts alone that we will face shortages as older GPs retire. Recent statistics from Australian Medical Workforce Advisory Committee (AMWAC) are further confirmation that medical workforce numbers will continue to fall."

ADGP CEO Kate Carnell said there needed to be a strategic approach to fixing the problem, not a collection of short-term, band-aid measures.

"Incentives to encourage ageing GPs and other health workers to remain in the workforce for longer, like those suggested in this latest research, will not solve the problem; at best they will simply postpone it.

"ADGP advocates measures to develop and support GP-led primary health care teams comprising practice nurses and other allied health professionals working cooperatively to manage the health of patients," Ms Carnell said.

"Workforce pressures in the areas of specialist and hospital care could be relieved if the emphasis of our health care was more primary-care focused. Research shows that health-care systems in which primary health care and general practice play a central role have high patient satisfaction, lower overall health expenditure and better population health indicators.

"We should keep these facts in mind when we look at addressing impending workforce shortages," Ms Carnell said.

Dr Walters said that while many GPs enjoyed the way they currently practiced, the diminishing numbers meant "things had to change".

"There is evidence that multidisciplinary practice teams can improve health outcomes, particularly when it comes to patients with chronic diseases who require long-term management.

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WHAT IS ADGP?

- ADGP is the peak body representing 119 Divisions of General Practice and eight State-based organisations (SBOs) around Australia. The Divisions Network supports general practice and their practice teams and drives the implementation of innovative health strategies.
- ADGP, through the Divisions Network, works to integrate general practice with other sectors of the health system, both government and non-government, to deliver high quality care to the Australian community.
- ADGP is committed to promoting the health of all Australians by supporting the role of Divisions in the nation's primary health care system.



Telephone 02 6228 0800

Facsimile 02 6228 0899

Email adgpreception@adgp.com.au

“These teams can take some of the burden off GPs, and support a more preventative approach to health care – one in which the promotion of ‘wellness’, rather than simply the treatment of disease, is core business,” Dr Walters said.

For comment please call Dr Rob Walters on 0418 127 123. For more information please contact Jane Castles, ADGP National Communications Coordinator, on 02 6228 0822 or 0412 392 577.

Australian Divisions of General Practice Ltd.

ACN 082 812 146

PO Box 1126 Belconnen ACT 2617

Telephone: 02-6251 3380 ♦ Facsimile: 02-6251 3390 ♦ Email: adgpreception@adgp.com.au