



NEWS RELEASE

Australian Divisions of General Practice Ltd.

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Divisions Network addressing aged care home survey findings

The Aged Care GP Panels Initiative – 2004 Aged Care Home Survey, which was released today by the Federal Department of Health and Ageing, highlights a range of challenges that are confronting the aged care sector in relation to primary medical care.

ADGP CEO Kate Carnell said the issues raised in the preliminary survey have long been identified as problem areas by aged care, general practice and the Divisions Network. Specific issues include access to general practice, especially emergency and after-hours services, medication management and contributions to quality improvement activities.

The survey found that 52 per cent of aged care homes reported they had difficulty obtaining GP services for new residents sometimes, often or always. The figure for existing residents was 63 per cent.

"The survey results are not news to those working in the field. The access figures are a concern, but they are precisely the reason why the Aged Care Panels Initiative was introduced. We knew what the problems were, and the survey has confirmed them," Ms Carnell said.

"The important thing is that collaborative, cross-sector steps are now being taken to overcome problems relating to medical services in aged care homes. The Divisions Network, together with general practice and the aged care sector, has been addressing these issues for the past year through the Aged Care GP Panels Initiative."

The Australian Government introduced the Aged Care GP Panels Initiative as part of a broader set of changes to strengthen and protect Medicare. The aim of the initiative is to improve access to primary medical care for residents of aged care homes and to enable GPs to work with aged care homes to assist with quality improvement strategies for the care of all residents.

Ms Carnell said the benefits of this program were two-fold. "It will ultimately improve access to primary health care for residents of aged care homes, and strengthen the positive partnerships between the sectors. Relationship-building has been a primary focus of this initiative since its introduction on 1 July 2004."

To overcome the challenges identified in the survey, Ms Carnell said it was important that all stakeholders remained focussed on strengthening relationships, improving communications, and setting up systems. "These efforts will, in time, result in a more appealing work environment for GPs and aged care staff, and ultimately lead to better health outcomes for our older citizens."

For more information call Jane Castles, Communications Coordinator, 02 6228 0822 or 0412 392 577.

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.



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