

Talking points for Dr Walters – Lifescripts Launch
27 September 2005, 1-2pm
Pit Building 1, Aughtie Drive, Albert Park Reserve

I would like to warmly welcome Minister Abbott, Maree Davidson, Cassie McConnell and my general practice and allied health colleagues to this event (*and any other dignitaries there on the day*).

I am delighted to be here today for the Ministerial launch of the new Lifescripts resources for general practice.

For GPs, consultations with patients who have one or more lifestyle risk factor for chronic disease is a day to day reality.

What is less common is GPs having access to high quality tools and resources to assist and support patients to make and maintain positive behaviour changes. Lifescripts provides some fantastic new high quality resources that are easy for GPs to use with patients.

Lifescripts focuses on lifestyle risk factors for chronic disease including smoking, alcohol, nutrition, physical activity and weight management.

The Lifescripts resources promote preventative health in the primary health care sector by assisting patients to reduce their risk of chronic disease.

Prevention is a key component of primary health care reform. I applaud the Government for supporting the implementation of this preventative health resource package through the Divisions of General Practice Network.

Lifestyle prescriptions and the supporting materials available in the Lifescripts resource pack are high quality tools for general practice to use when providing lifestyle advice to patients.

There is strong evidence that GPs providing brief advice and interventions with patients is effective in:

- reducing smoking;
- curtailing risky drinking;
- encouraging healthier eating; and
- increasing levels of physical activity.

Changing everyday habits is not easy for patients, and requires motivation and support. General practice is in a strong position to provide that support.

General practitioners are often the first port of call for people seeking information about their health and are ideally placed to advise and assist people to achieve a healthy balance in their lifestyles.

We know that brief, repeated and non-judgemental lifestyle advice from a GP can help change patient behaviour and improve health outcomes for individuals. The Lifescripts resources facilitate a nationally consistent approach to providing lifestyle advice to patients.

Lifescrpts provides the framework for GPs and Practice Nurses to provide personalised advice, assist the patient to make lifestyle changes and arrange referral and follow up to help people maintain those changes.

The Lifescrpts tools make it easier for GPs to support patients to make healthier lifestyle choices. The tools available under Lifescrpts include assessment tools and prescription pads for each of the five risk areas.

Eighty six percent of Australians visit their GP at least once a year. This puts GPs in an ideal position to advise patients on lifestyle issues because they can reach such a large proportion of the population.

Of the patients who visit a GP, 33% are overweight many who consume poor diets; about 20% are smokers; nearly 30% drink alcohol at risky levels, and as many as 66% are not physically active enough. Lifescrpts resources have the potential to impact positively on many of these patients' lives.

There is a great deal of flexibility in how the resources can be used making them adaptable to different types of practices. Practices can choose to use the resources opportunistically during patient consultations or they could develop a whole of practice approach to the implementation of Lifescrpts by incorporating prevention into clinical processes.

I congratulate the Government for engaging the Divisions Network to support general practice to use these new resources. We know that providing capacity to Divisions is one of the major factors in the successful implementation of new initiatives with general practice.

The Department has provided funding to the Australian Divisions of General Practice for a national coordinator to implement and promote Lifescrpts on a national basis.

ADGP will provide national leadership, assistance and support for the Network's State Based Organisations, and through them local Divisions in the implementation of Lifescrpts.

The role of the national coordinator is also to contribute to the dissemination of information and resources and to establish and maintain relationships with stakeholders in chronic disease prevention and lifestyle risk factors.

The Department is also supporting the Divisions Network's State Based Organisations to implement the resources on a state wide level and to support our local Divisions of General Practice in rolling out the resources. Lifescrpts resources will complement a range of programs that the Divisions Network is already involved in including the Practice Nurse Program, Chronic Disease Management and Practice visiting programs.

Promoting of Lifescrpts to General Practice will help us in working towards our goal of a wellness oriented, primary health care system. General Practice is pivotal in such a system.

I would like to introduce Tony Abbott, Minister for Health and Ageing to launch Lifescrpts.

Thank you Minister. I'd like to now introduce Maree Davidson. Maree was the Lifescripts Program Manager for Kinect Australia, an organisation that was part of the consortium who developed these high quality Lifescripts resources.

Thank you Maree and congratulations on these excellent resources.

Joining us for the launch today is a number of people from the Karingal Hub Health Walks program. It's great to see so many of you here today.

This program provides opportunities for older adults, people with chronic health conditions and those who just want to stay healthy to exercise in a supported environment.

The group walks three days a week in a shopping centre on the Mornington Peninsula and are lead by a fitness instructor. On average, 75 people attend each walking session.

The walks are a collaborative project between Frankston Community Health Service, Peninsula Health Falls Prevention Program, the Mornington Peninsula Division of General Practice and the Karingal Hub Shopping Centre.

These indoor walks have been happening for the last 5 years and the project has proven sustainable.

I'd like to invite Cassie McConnell who leads the group to take us on a short walk (weather permitting). Cassie is a physiotherapist and is also the physical activity promotion worker for the Frankston Community Health Service.