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Teach men early about the importance of health care

Men take their car to be serviced more often than they take themselves to be checked out by their General Practitioner (GP) leading to basic problems becoming big health issues, says Australian General Practice Network (AGPN) chair Dr Emil Djakic.

Dr Djakic, a Tasmanian GP, said simple programs teaching boys how to access health when they are at school could make a dramatic difference to their later uptake of health services.

“We know that men are poor users of health services like general practice and we know there are a number of services they could be accessing, and not just when they have an injury or problem, but as a regular part of taking care of their health,” he said.

While women often use health services, men are less likely to consider preventive measures, like health checks and screening as a normal part of their health or fitness.

However, general practice also has to identify the best ways to deliver health care to men. There are a number of programs through general practice networks specifically designed for men. Pit Stop is one program in rural and regional Australia that uses a car analogy to get the health message across to men.

“If a man gets his car serviced at least once a year, why will he not take such good care of his own engine? Pit stop also travels to where men are, rather than relying on them to make an appointment with a practice. But building a relationship involving regular appointments with their GP is the best thing men can do for their health,” Dr Djakic said.

While men’s health in general is an issue, Indigenous men still have the worst health outcomes in Australia and governments need to focus on this group, Dr Djakic said.

“We know promotional activities like Movember encourage men to talk about their health, but they don’t reach Indigenous groups very well. How else can we get the message to these groups?” he said.

Dr Djakic said he was pleased with the interest shown by government in learning more about these health issues and looked forward to the Senate committee recommendations going forward.

For media interviews please phone AGPN Communications Manager Frith Rayner on 02 6228 0819 or 0402 267 190