



22 July 2009

Save lives, save money and save the health system – invest in general practice

Investing in general practice care will dramatically improve hospital care, save lives and save money, says Australian General Practice Network (AGPN) chair Dr Emil Djakic.

Dr Djakic, a Tasmanian General Practitioner (GP), disputes claims by AMA President Dr Andrew Pesce that government plans to prioritise primary health care will not improve hospital care or waiting times for surgery.

“What better way to stop bed blocking than by not having people in hospitals at all? We know about 700,000 Australians are unnecessarily hospitalised every year – they could be kept out of hospitals if general practice was properly supported,” Dr Djakic said.

Contrary to AMA claims, Dr Djakic said the Government would only improve hospital care by investing in primary health care.

“A shift to a ‘prevention is better than cure’ model will significantly reduce pressure on hospitals because those chronically ill patients who end up in hospitals now – with heart disease and diabetes – simply won’t be there,” he said.

Dr Djakic said any government health reform agenda would be wasted if reform was not built on general practice at its core.

“Hospital care has its place, but it should be for when people really need acute care. Too many patients end up in hospitals and get sicker, when they could be cared for in the community.”

The cure for the health system was not necessarily more money, but money wisely spent - which evidence tells us, is money spent in primary health care, he said.

“General practice is funded to provide episodic care to whoever walks through the doors. We know this is not always the best way to treat those growing numbers of chronically ill patients. As a GP, I want a payment system that allows me to choose the best model of care for my patients,” he said.

Dr Djakic continues to support a blended payment system for general practice with payments based on practice population and fee-for-service and encourages understanding of the patient population.

“We see merit in voluntary patient enrolment with a practice, primarily for those with a chronic illness. The system we have at the moment does not support it in practices now and does not facilitate best practice care for those patients. We have a once in a lifetime opportunity to change our system, I sincerely hope we take it.”

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

Dr Djakic will also be available at the Press Club today for interviews