

Medical Board of Australia consultation on the funding of external doctors' health programs

Submission received from: **Raymun Ghumman**

Question 1: Is there a need for health programs?

Do you see any value in, or need for external health programs for medical students and/or doctors? Please explain your reasoning

I do see value and need for external health programs for medical students and doctors because:

- Many GPs are reluctant, and feel uncomfortable, about treating other medical professionals. The provision of a service specifically for doctors means that those seeking their services don't have to be preoccupied about whether the health provider feels comfortable providing care to another health professional.

- Further to the above point, medical students thus need to be targeted early to find a good GP who they feel comfortable with and can consult long term.

- Many doctors who work in a rural or remote environment do not have any choice of health professionals who they can see privately for personal issues, who are not already colleagues with whom they work in close proximity. An external service provides support separate from the doctor's professional environment.

Question 2: Preferred model for external health programs

Of the existing models in Australia as described above, is there a model that you would prefer to see adopted nationally? Is there an alternative model that you would like to see adopted nationally?

The VDHP certainly provides the most comprehensive service. The only deficit in their portfolio is the training more doctors to treat a doctor-patient.

The adoption of a national model is appropriate so that doctors Australia wide receive a consistent range of services and support.

Question 3: The role of the Board in funding external health programs

Do you believe that it is the role of the Board to fund external health programs?

The role of the Board is multi-dimensional. One of these roles should be to support external health programs for doctors, particularly as one of the Board's primary objectives is to protect the public from impaired practitioners. Thus it seems logical that the Board should actively promote the well being and preventative health initiatives of the medical workforce that it regulates.

Question 4: Range of services provided by doctors' health programs

What services should be provided by doctors' health programs. In addition to the ones you have selected, what other services (if any) should be provided by doctors' health programs?

Telephone advice available 24/7

Referral to expert practitioners for assessment and management

Develop and maintain a list of practitioners who are willing to treat colleagues

Education services for medical practitioners and medical students to raise awareness of health issues for the medical profession and to encourage practitioners and students to have a general practitioner

Programs to enhance the skills of medical practitioners who assess and manage the health of doctors

Research on doctors' health issues

Question 5: Funding

How much of an increase in registration fees is acceptable to you, to fund doctors' health services?

\$10 - \$25

Question 6: Other comments

Do you have any other comments or feedback about external health programs?

Abolition of an external health program will be a detriment both to the medical profession and the Australia public. There is a certain hypocrisy in promoting health care to the wider community but not also encouraging a similar level of health care seeking behaviour among the medical community.

The presence of a national program will ensure universal and standardised care and allow for more efficient staffing and allocation of resources. For example, providing a national 24/7 telephone help line is surely more effective than endeavouring to provide such a service separately in each state.