



Message to members

Video consultations – great opportunity for patients and GPs

From 1 July 2011 new MBS items will be available for video consultations. Through this innovative initiative GPs will be able to more effectively facilitate other specialist involvement in a patient's care through the use of video consultations in outer metropolitan, regional and remote Australia. The College is highly supportive of telehealth initiatives and is committed to supporting the profession during the telehealth rollout.

To encourage medical specialists to uptake telehealth services, the government provides financial incentives through specific MBS item numbers for video consultation, financial incentives through Service Incentive Payments and funding to support establishing the service and purchasing equipment.

To guide GPs through telehealth consultations and provide a safety and quality framework for patients and GPs, the RACGP is working on a number of telehealth initiatives, including the development of the telehealth standards for GPs that are planned to be made available in October 2011.

While the College is supportive of video consultations, we note that there are a few challenges in regards to the technical requirements, and we are currently developing a technical implementation guide which will be available shortly. Ultimately, the objective is not only to improve patient care but also to ensure a positive and productive telehealth experience for both GPs and their patients. In the meantime, we advise all general practices not to rush into purchasing equipment because there are practical issues with video consultation across service providers that need to be considered. We encourage all GPs to wait for guidance from the College before purchasing equipment or engaging in contractual arrangements with providers.

In addition, there is an urgent need for the government to set up a national provider service directory to ensure GPs, aged care facilities and Aboriginal community workers have easy access to specialists using computers and with telehealth facilities.

The RACGP has set up a special telehealth service centre, which will be available from Monday 4 July 9.00 am AEST on 1800 257 053, for any telehealth related enquiries. For more information on the service centre and the new MBS telehealth items, visit www.racgp.org.au/telehealth. Information regarding the RACGP telehealth standards development is available at www.racgp.org.au/standards/telehealth.

Inquiry into mental health funding cuts

The College last week welcomed the move to hold a senate inquiry into the Federal Government's decision to cut the Medicare patient rebates for GP mental health services in the 2011–2012 Federal Budget. The senate inquiry comes after strong and consistent lobbying on the issue by the RACGP and our colleagues within United General Practice Australia (UGPA) and we are expecting to speak to the senate inquiry directly. I thank all the patients, GPs, community leaders and interested politicians who have worked with us to raise awareness of the implications of the budget cuts to some of the most vulnerable Australians. The College's response to the senate inquiry is available at www.racgp.org.au/media2011/42945.

The AMA has commissioned an independent company (EMC) to undertake a survey to further assess the impact of these cuts on you and your patients. I encourage members to participate in this survey as it is important to demonstrate to government and the community the real impact these changes will have on patients and that GPs are united in their opposition. Please give

five minutes of your time to complete the survey, which can be accessed at <http://ama2011.questionpro.com>. The survey will be open until 8 July 2011.

Fiji College of General Practitioners annual conference

In the midst of a frenetic fortnight, I was privileged to attend the Fiji College of General Practitioners 19th annual conference, People's Health in our Hands. The weekend was a combination of the Fiji College's legendary hospitality, and excellence of both the conference program and the spectacular venue. It was inspiring to see a nation so focused on delivering quality primary healthcare, and joining with other Colleges globally in significant primary care reform.

Professor Claire Jackson
RACGP President

General practice news

Government news

Recent changes to pneumococcal vaccine for children

From 1 July 2011, Prevenar 13[®] (a 13-valent conjugate vaccine) will replace Prevenar 7[®] (a 7-valent conjugate vaccine) on the National Immunisation Program in all states and territories except the Northern Territory. Prevenar 13[®] provides protection against an additional six serotypes, which can cause invasive pneumococcal disease that are not covered by Prevenar 7[®]. For more information visit www.racgp.org.au/news/43016.

TGA Statement on FDA letter to CSL

The United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has issued a 'warning letter' to CSL Biotherapies following their audit of CSL's manufacturing facility. The Therapeutic Goods Administration's (TGA's) response in regards to CSL's



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handling of concerns about the quality of its influenza vaccine, Fluvax[®], is available at www.tga.gov.au/newsroom/csl-warning-letter.htm.

Better Start for Children with Disability Initiative MBS items

As part of the Australian Government's Better Start for Children with Disability Initiative, two new Medicare items will be available to medical practitioners as of today. These items are available to refer children with an eligible disability for treatment services to audiologists, occupational therapists, orthoptists, optometrists, physiotherapists, psychologists and speech pathologists. Visit www.racgp.org.au/news/42965.

RACGP news

The RACGP Curriculum update – call for comments

The RACGP is currently updating the Curriculum for Australian General Practice 2007 to meet the needs of the changing clinical, educational and training environment. Invitation to comment is extended to all members, stakeholders, health organisations and community members. Information on how to submit comment can be found at www.racgp.org.au/curriculum/feedback. All current sections of the RACGP Curriculum are available at www.racgp.org.au/curriculum. Please complete all submissions by 29 July 2011.

2011 RACGP Convocation agenda items

The call for agenda items for the 2011 RACGP Convocation is now open. Together with our College's Annual General Meeting (AGM), Convocation will be held at our forthcoming GP11 conference on Wednesday 5 October 2011 in Hobart. Agenda items for Convocation need to be submitted in advance, and College members are invited to submit items for Convocation by Wednesday 27 July 2011. The official submission form must be used and may

be downloaded at www.racgp.org.au/council/convocation.

2011 PrimaryCare Sidebar[®] webinar series – extended throughout July

GPs who missed out on the June 2011 PrimaryCare Sidebar[®] lunchtime series will have the opportunity to participate in July. Session times are Mondays and Wednesdays from 12.00 pm – 1.00 pm AEST, and Wednesdays 2.30 pm – 3.30 pm AEST. In week 1 of July, you'll find out how you can access eTG complete via the 2011 PrimaryCare Sidebar[®] and find evidence based patient management information at point-of-care, quickly and easily. No preregistration is required to attend the webinar, but please log in at 11.50 am AEST (2.20 pm AEST) for the 12.00 pm AEST (2.30 pm) start. For log in details visit www.primarycaresidebar.com.au.

While you're waiting – winter edition

The winter edition of *While you're waiting...*, the College's complimentary consumer magazine, is now available. Patients are encouraged to take home a copy of the magazine from their GP's waiting room. For more information or to order more copies, visit www.racgp.org.au/whileyourewaiting.

Getting involved

Call for nominations: NRF board representatives

Nominations for the state representatives of Victoria and West Australia on the National Rural Faculty (NRF) Board open today. Positions are for 2 years and all Fellows who are financial members and members of the faculty as at 30 June 2011 are eligible to be nominated for the state in which they are ordinarily resident. Nominations close on 22 July 2011. If there is more than one nomination, all nominees will be informed of the need for an election. Notification to the voting members will take place via *Fridayfacts* and voting will open on 15 August 2011 for a period of 28 days. Successful nominees will be inaugurated at the NRF AGM at GP11. Nomination forms are available from www.racgp.org.au/rural/

mediarelease/43008 or by calling the faculty on 03 8699 0418.

Faculty Censor – would you like to help close the gap?

The RACGP National Faculty of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health is seeking its first Faculty Censor. This role is important in leading the RACGP's efforts to improve the skills of doctors in working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The position sits on the Board of the National Faculty of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and will be a member of the College's Board of Censors and Board of Assessment working with Censors from the other College faculties. More details and selection criteria are available at www.racgp.org.au/aboriginalhealth/news/42916.

Call for board nominations

Would you like to become more involved in setting the direction of the RACGP National Faculty of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health? Nominations for the following board positions are currently available and open today: provost, registrar, student and international medical graduate representatives, and representatives from all states and the Torres Strait Islands. Nominations close 22 July 2011. Nomination forms and further information can be found at www.racgp.org.au/aboriginalhealth/news/42964 or by contacting the faculty on aboriginalhealth@racgp.org.au or calling 1800 000 125.

RACGP learning & development

gplearning – conventional and complementary medicine

Responding to requests for shorter activities and education focused on common general practice presentations, *gplearning* has released the Conventional Versus Complementary Medicine activity series. The activities allow GPs to compare their management of depression, fatigue, migraine and osteoarthritis cases. Two contributing GPs are Dr Frances Cadden and Dr Vicki Kotsirilos. Each activity takes 30–40 minutes and has been approved for one Category 2 RACGP QI&CPD Program points. Visit www.gplearning.com.au.

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Australian Government

Department of Veterans' Affairs

More choice for GPs when referring veterans for mental health services

GPs can now refer DVA clients to mental health professionals registered with Medicare Australia.

These include clinical psychologists, psychologists, mental health social workers and mental health occupational therapists.

Mental health professionals no longer need to contract separately with DVA.

For more information visit: www.dva.gov.au/service_providers

For information about veteran mental health issues go to www.at-ease.dva.gov.au and click on the Resources for Health Professionals tab.

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