



THE ROYAL AUSTRALIAN COLLEGE OF GENERAL PRACTITIONERS

Near Patient Testing (Interim Position)

This position is an interim position developed by a small group of College members and is yet to be released broadly to members and subsequently endorsed by College Council.

The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) believes that on-site pathology testing in general practice is an essential, valuable and appropriate activity for increasing the provision of patient care and is core business for modern and future general practice. The RACGP also believes that NPT should be routine activity in general practice from the earliest possible opportunity allowed by the technology.

Near Patient Testing (NPT) has several benefits for patients, for example through the immediacy of test results. The general practice setting is well placed to provide NPT in a quality-controlled, supervised environment that caters to point of care treatment.

The RACGP recognises that a range of pathology tests can be safely and competently performed in the home. A range of pathology tests can also be undertaken safely and competently in partnership with GPs, in general practice. Other pathology tests are more appropriately undertaken in the pathology laboratory. In many instances neither laboratory accreditation nor a pathologist is required to perform the tests that give accurate and rapid results. As technology advances the opportunity to undertake pathology testing closer to the patient should be taken.

The RACGP holds the view that its established education and training framework, based on life-long learning, can provide excellent support for the quality assurance processes necessary to extend the scope of pathology testing undertaken in general practice. This framework includes:

- The establishment of curriculum for vocational training in general practice
- The establishment of practice standards
- The determination of requirements for Quality Assurance/Continuing Professional Development for General Practitioners.

The College also has an informal influence over undergraduate education in the medical field.

The RACGP also acknowledges that there a series of tests that are currently performed in the laboratory that can safely be performed in general practice, for significant cost savings. Evidence suggests that NPT in general practice is safe, cost effective and an efficient way to deliver patient care.

To ensure the continued seamless transition of NPT into the general practice setting, the RACGP should be included in all current and future discussions on pathology initiatives in general practice.

Additionally, the RACGP proposes that a steering group to establish the standards for introduction be created. The proposed General Practice NPT Health Standards Collaboration (GP NPT HSC) should comprise of stakeholders from organisations that have an active interest in general practice, quality and standards' development.

The RACGP believes that by October 2002 the group could determine the scope of safe NPT in general practice settings and determine the scope and nature of quality assurance processes that apply to the general practitioner, the general practice, and the pathology equipment.

The RACGP see these two issues as essential precursors to the introduction of NPT into the Medicare Schedule.

At the same time, the College will enter into immediate discussions to develop appropriate funding arrangements for an expanded GP NPT Medicare Schedule to be introduced in the next revision of the MBS.

In support of these measures the GP NPT HSC will provide an on-going process for coordinating an agreement on research priorities in the area, provide advice on appropriate funding models and develop a process for introducing emerging NPT technology into general practice.

The RACGP strongly supports development in the pathology equipment industry that would provide testing equipment that is reliable and cost-effective, yet on a scale which is appropriate and affordable for general practice settings.

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