

RACGP: Greater investment needed in general practice care of people with diabetes

The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) has urged the new federal Government to boost investment in general practice to provide more time to care for people with diabetes.

It comes during [National Diabetes Week](#) (10 – 16 July 2022). Around 1.8 million people in Australia have diabetes (this includes all types of diabetes as well as silent, undiagnosed type 2 diabetes) with 280 people developing the condition every day.

RACGP President Adj. Professor Karen Price said that the new federal Government can do more to enhance general practice care of people with diabetes.

“GPs and general practice teams play a vital role helping people manage chronic conditions like diabetes,” she said.

“With the right kind of investment, we can do even more. Greater support for longer consultations and GP-led team care will make a huge difference for people with chronic conditions. The RACGP is calling for the introduction of a rebate for GP consultations that last 60 minutes or more and a 10% increase to existing Medicare rebates lasting more than 20 minutes. Longer consultations provide an opportunity for GPs to support care of people with chronic conditions.

“Coordinating care with other health professionals is also important in complex chronic conditions like diabetes. The [Workforce Incentive Program](#) or WIP provides financial incentives to practices across Australia to meet the complex health needs of older patients and those with chronic complex health conditions. It helps them to engage a range of health professionals including nurses, allied health professionals, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workers and health practitioners.

“By boosting investment in the Workforce Incentive Program practices could, for example, work more closely with other health professionals such as diabetes educators or general practice-based pharmacists. The RACGP has long championed co-ordinated care to reduce fragmentation and healthcare costs.

“By incorporating the pharmacist role within the general practice setting we can offer an alternative model that delivers integrated care, something that is especially important for people with diabetes. This would be particularly beneficial for people managing their diabetes and make a real difference in communities nation-wide, especially those disproportionately affected by this condition such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.”

Chair of the RACGP Specific Interests Diabetes Network Dr Gary Deed backed Adj. Professor Price’s comments.

“We know that living day-to-day with a chronic disease such as diabetes can significantly impact someone’s life, including the fact that it is associated with higher rates of mental health issues. This is a national problem, and, with greater support, practices can help people take charge of their health and get a better handle on conditions like diabetes,” he said.

“If a patient doesn’t have the right kind of support and isn’t managing their condition properly, the consequences can prove dire. As an example, untreated or poorly managed diabetes can quickly lead to severe complications that involve almost all every part of your body, including your heart, eyes, blood vessels, kidneys, nerves, and more. So, I fully support Adj. Professor Price’s call for the Government to give practices a helping hand so that more people are supported in managing their diabetes.”

National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) Director, Medicines Policy and Programs Mike Stephens said that the right approaches are crucial in helping Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients better manage their diabetes.

Wednesday 13 July 2022

“The Integrating Pharmacists within Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services to Improve Chronic Disease Management, known as the ‘IPAC Project’, which embedded pharmacists into ACCHOs has been effective in improving the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, including those with conditions such as diabetes,” he said.

“We are encouraged by the Medical Services Advisory Committee’s recent appraisal in June 2022 of IPAC: ‘an excellent example of an integrated, collaborative, patient-centred approach to primary care which has the potential to have a meaningful societal impact by improving equity of health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’.

“Given the project’s demonstrable acceptability and effectiveness, it is time for government to provide a sustained investment in integrating pharmacists into team-based primary care settings, including ACCHOs. One existing program that provides a suitable framework for funding includes the WIP.”

In 2020 in collaboration with Diabetes Australia, the RACGP has launched the updated [Management of type 2 diabetes: A handbook for general practice](#) (Diabetes Handbook) as a primary healthcare tool to support practices nation-wide.

The RACGP’s [Vision for general practice and a sustainable healthcare system](#) outlines a model of care that aims to address the nation’s healthcare challenges and ensure the best possible health outcomes for patients through general practice. The [economic benefits](#) of implementing the Vision show that it is a sound return on investment.

~ENDS

RACGP spokespeople are available for interview.

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About the RACGP

The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) is the peak representative organisation for general practice, the backbone of Australia’s health system. We set the standards for general practice, facilitate lifelong learning for GPs, connect the general practice community, and advocate for better health and wellbeing for all Australians.

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