

EDITORIAL

The Need for a National Primary Health Policy

Maria Teresa Dawson

In March 2005, the General Practice Division Victoria (GPDV) prepared an issues paper on the need for a national primary health policy (GPDV 2005). GPDV called for responses to this issues paper, giving Health Issues Centre the opportunity to reflect on the reforms needed to improve primary health care and the policies that should accompany such reforms. This article summarises Health Issues Centre's response to this issues paper.

DIGEST

Contains short pieces on:

- *Health Issues* readers survey;
- Campaign to limit IVF reimbursement;
- Reducing perinatal mortality among Indigenous babies;
- The link between literacy levels and health;
- Report on Victorian mental health services;
- Mental health first aid training;
- Safety in USA hospitals;
- Overcoming health workforce shortages;
- How missing patient information can affect care; and
- Internet health information.

NEWS

The Refugee and Asylum Seeker Health Network: Celebrating Three Years of Servicing Medicare-Ineligible Asylum Seekers in Victoria

Melina Simmond and Vanessa Johnston

For the past three years, the Refugee and Asylum Seeker Health Network, a collection of pro bono health and welfare practitioners, has been working to ensure that asylum seekers living in Victoria without access to Medicare and the pharmaceutical Benefits scheme are given access appropriate and timely health care. This article seeks to document and celebrate the achievements and successes of the network over this period.

OPINION

Belief Versus Reality in Reforming Health Care

J Michael Wynne

J Michael Wynne is a retired surgeon who has spent over 15 years following the changes from a predominantly not-for-profit to a for-profit health care system in the USA and Australia. This article explores two conflicting patterns of thinking, for-profit and not-for-profit currently influence Australian health care. It describes the differences between these two precepts and how people resolve to mental resolve the conflict between them. The consequences of this conflict and the domination of for-profit thinking in health care are illustrated with examples from the USA.

FEATURES

How Patient-centred is Australian General Practice?

C. A. Barton, J. Proudfoot, G. Powell-Davies, C. Holton, T. Bubner, C. Amoroso, M. Harris and J. Beilby

Patient-centred care can be described generally as an approach that emphasises attention to patients' psychosocial as well as physical needs. The approach emphasises that treatment choice takes patient preferences into account, and that self-care is supported as well as treatment. Central to this is the development of a sense of partnership in care, and facilitation of patient involvement in decision making about

treatment decisions (Mead et al. 2002). Patients have been found to prefer patient-centred care, and those who receive it, also report better health outcomes (Little et al. 2001). This article examines the analysis of the General Practice Assessment Survey (GPAS) and what it reveals about the degree of patient-centred care experienced by participants.

Assessing Consumer Ratings of Quality in General Practice Needs More Than Just Rating Scales

Vanessa Rose

Accurate assessments of quality in general practice are dependent on the views of health consumers. Currently, consumers' views of general practice quality are primarily assessed using rating scales. Rating scales are quick, cheap and capable of eliciting large amounts of data from numerous respondents in any easy-to-use and interpret format. But how dependable is the information they present? This article discusses the limitations of ratings scales and proposes mixed-method approaches as a viable alternative to assessing consumer views on quality in general practice.

Patient Partnership and Shared Decision Making: Involving Patients in Management Decisions

Jill E Thistlethwaite

Research shows that involving patients in decisions about their health care and treatment improves outcomes and patient satisfaction. This article explores the meaning of patient partnership and shared decision making, and discusses the contrast between these two concepts and consumerism.

Learning As We Go: Lessons for Australian General Practice after 25 Years of HIV/AIDS

Michael Richard Kidd

Next year, 2006, will see the 25th anniversary of the world's first publication about HIV/AIDS. On 5 June 1981, the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Surveillance Report of the USA Centre for Disease Control published a report on a strange new condition. This 1981 article was not premature, however, and those working and living in gay communities in Australia and abroad knew that something terrible was happening to members of our communities well before that date. My aim in this article is to share twelve important lessons I have learnt from the management of HIV in Australian general practice over the past 25 years.

REVIEW

Running on Empty: Hypothyroidism—An Introduction to an Underactive Thyroid Gland

Reviewed by Peter Greenberg and Christine Walker

All health consumers require information that is well-researched and easily accessible so they can contribute, as much as they choose, to decisions about the kind of health care they think best suits their needs. However, with many illnesses the need for information continues, providing the person with the ability to engage in discussions with health providers, make informed decisions, and generally have a good background understanding of what is happening to their bodies, and the treatments that are on offer. This book attempts to fill the information needs of the many people who have, or suspect they have, underactive thyroid glands.

RESOURCES

Contains short reviews of the following publications:

- Australian Hospital Statistics 2003–2004;
- Management Guideline: Developmental Disability;
- Consumers' Experiences of Treatment for Depression: Pathways to Recovery;
- Taking Young People Seriously; and
- Electronic Health Records Forum Presentation Notes.
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Contains short reviews of the following websites:

- Online Consumer Organisation Directory;
- Victorian Public Hospital Performance;
- International Alliance of Patients' Organisations; and
- INVOLVE.