

RACGP slams pharmacy prescribing pilot extension - Royal Australian College of GPs 7 Jul 2022 6:05 AM

The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) has slammed Queensland Health's decision to extend the UTI pharmacy prescribing pilot despite concerns raised by leading health groups, including the RACGP.

It follows [reports](#) of Queensland Health advising that the controversial [pilot](#), which allows pharmacists to prescribe antibiotics for uncomplicated urinary tract infections or UTIs, will continue while work takes place "determining the future of the scheme". They also pointed towards [a 118-page evaluation report](#), which has been made public for the first time. Some of the contents of the report were previously [reported](#) on by *The Australian* several months ago.

The RACGP has raised [significant concerns](#) about this pilot based on numerous alarming incidents emerging such as patients wrongly being prescribed antibiotics. In May this year, the Australian Medical Association Queensland [published](#) doctor survey results which suggested as many as one in five GPs could have treated patients with complications resulting from their involvement in the pharmacy pilot. There were "at least" 239 patients reported with post-trial complications among the doctors surveyed.

RACGP President Adj. Professor Karen Price warned that extending the pilot would compromise patient safety and wellbeing.

"Queensland Health is playing with fire. The RACGP strongly believes that the UTI pharmacy pilot should be halted in its tracks and a comprehensive independent inquiry launched without delay," she said.

"This is a recipe for disaster, we should not have non-medical health professionals providing services they are not trained to provide in an unsupervised retail setting.

"The incidents to emerge so far highlight just how dangerous this pilot is. We know of a patient in their 20s being interviewed about symptoms at the counter within earshot of multiple customers. There was patient in their 50s prescribed antibiotics for a presumed UTI who turned out to have a 15-centimetre pelvic mass causing serious urinary symptoms. A patient in their 60s with a recurrent UTI, who therefore should not have even been eligible to access antibiotics in the first place, was prescribed the antibiotic trimethoprim despite known resistance to the drug.

"There are red flags everywhere and as the college has warned previously – we strongly suspect that these incidents are just the tip of the iceberg."

RACGP Vice President Dr Bruce Willett said that the decision to extend the pilot was disappointing and that the adverse outcomes figures reported are likely to under-represent the issues encountered by patients across Queensland.

"The only person that the patient could report their adverse outcome to was the pharmacist responsible and they're reluctant to do that," he said.

"This is not a proper assessment and the RACGP will continue to vigorously oppose this measure that is putting patients' wellbeing at risk. This sham trial needs to be scrapped and a proper scientific assessment of this as a new treatment regime needs to be conducted, as would be the case of any new treatment regime."

~ENDS

RACGP spokespeople are available for interview.

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