

Friday, 11 November 2022

### **Medicine safety depends on doctors and pharmacists working together**

The AMA said today that the global #MedSafetyWeek was a timely reminder of the need for medicine safety to remain a key priority for policy makers, including the preservation of the separation of prescribing and dispensing to protect the community.

The AMA marked this week's global #MedSafetyWeek (7-13 November) saying that patients are best served when doctors and pharmacists work together in providing care for the community.

AMA President Professor Stephen Robson said he was concerned poor policy decisions by State governments were undermining the important safeguard for patients, evidenced by the move to over-the-counter urinary tract infection (UTI) prescribing by pharmacists in Queensland and a "dangerous" prescribing experiment approved for North Queensland.

"This is a model that promotes pharmacy profits at the cost of patient safety," he said.

"Pharmacists are experts in medications and medication management and the AMA wants to work with pharmacists to develop models where we can contribute more to the delivery of health care in this country in a safe and collaborative way.

"Unfortunately, we are seeing models being pushed that do the opposite. They fragment care and lead to negative health outcomes, as we have seen in Queensland."

Earlier this year, AMA Queensland conducted a survey of more than 1300 doctors across the state about the outcomes from what was at the time a trial of pharmacy UTI prescribing.

The survey revealed at least 240 patients treated by pharmacists suffered complications from misdiagnosis – most common sexually-transmitted infections (STIs), but also cancerous conditions and pregnancies.

Patients were also sold antibiotics that were not only inappropriate but dangerous.

Professor Robson said one in five GPs and one in eight of doctors who responded to the AMAQ survey– including emergency doctors and oncologists - reported seeing at least one complication.

"At least six pregnant women were sold antibiotics that are unsafe in the first trimester. One of them had a potentially life-threatening ectopic pregnancy," he said.

"At least nine patients ended up in hospital with sepsis or kidney and bladder infections due to ineffective or delayed treatment."

The AMA is calling on all state and territory governments considering adopting Queensland's irresponsible trials to reflect on the real harm this has caused the community.

The AMA supports the principles of Quality Use of Medicines. As prescribers of medicines, doctors have key responsibilities to ensure medicine safety.

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