

WERE BLADDER CANCER DIAGNOSES MISSED?

AMA Queensland calls for UTI trial evaluation results to be released

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Before Queensland Health moves any further with its secret plan to allow pharmacists to diagnose and treat more than 20 serious conditions, it must release the results of its trial allowing pharmacists to sell antibiotics for possible urinary tract infections (UTIs).

“We have no idea of the success or otherwise of the UTI prescribing trial, which started in 2018 and was recently extended indefinitely,” AMA Queensland President Professor Chris Perry said.

“Queensland Health and the Pharmacy Guild recently declared it a success, and a huge win for women’s health.

“However, they have not released any evidence of the health outcomes for the women involved. UTIs are not always a simple bacterial infection. UTI symptoms are common to other serious health issues, including bladder cancer, chlamydia and kidney infections.

“Diagnosis for these conditions requires taking a detailed patient history, physical examination, and ordering tests that pharmacists do not have the authority to do.

“However, pharmacists in this trial were able to charge their patients a non-Medicare fee for their diagnosis.

“This trial was opposed by hospital pharmacists, urologists, infectious disease specialists, and doctors.

“It was not a clinically-registered trial, and the only evaluation we have seen so far is the number of prescriptions written.

“We don’t know how many pharmacists performed a basic urine test before diagnosing a bacterial infection and selling antibiotics.

“We don’t know if any follow-up was done to see how many patients subsequently sought further treatment from a GP, or presented to an emergency department, or were later diagnosed with a more serious condition, including cancer.

“This trial has been in place since 2018, so patient safety outcomes should be well and truly known by now. They must be made public so everyone can have confidence that allowing pharmacists to diagnose and prescribe is safe for the community at large.

“However, without releasing these results, the Queensland Government is proposing to use the outcomes of this ‘trial’ to expand it to 23 other medical conditions for a new and dangerous experiment in North Queensland.

“The national medicines regulator, the Therapeutic Goods Administration, has already ruled out another Queensland plan to allow pharmacists to sell the oral contraceptive pill over the counter because of the serious risks to women’s health.

“Yet the Queensland Government is persisting with both UTI diagnosis and oral contraceptive prescribing as part of its North Queensland Pharmacy Scope of Practice pilot. Both affect women’s health.

“We understand that women are busy and there is great appeal in being able to go to their pharmacy for their pill or for UTI treatment. No-one wants to think their UTI symptoms could be cancer, or that they might suffer a blood clot or stroke from their contraceptive pill.

“Doctors value pharmacists. They are the experts in medications and GPs work collaboratively with their local pharmacist every day.

“Many GPs started their medical career in pharmacy before undertaking the years of training needed to become a trusted family doctor. GPs train for 12 years, pharmacists for four years.

“The conditions covered under this proposed pilot are complex and require more than an undergraduate degree and an online course to be properly diagnosed and managed. We call on Queensland Health to release the evaluation report of the UTI trial immediately and stop the North Queensland pharmacy trial.”

Read more about the North Queensland pharmacy trial [here](#).

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