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Regional Queenslanders write script for future health care

Regional Queenslanders rely on their GPs as the first port of call for health care, according to a new survey that quizzed more than 1000 people across the state.

The AMA Queensland survey measured community attitudes to primary health care and found 84 per cent of regional Queenslanders had a regular GP they consulted each time they needed medical advice or treatment.

Confidentiality and expert advice were the most highly valued attributes of having a regular GP, according to the survey.

“People want consistent, expert medical advice and a private conversation with a trusted confidante,” said AMA Queensland President Dr Dilip Dhupelia.

“The survey also found that regional Queenslanders, like their city counterparts, are most likely to turn to a GP in the first instance, rather than a physiotherapist, pharmacist or other practitioner, for help with common health care needs such as contraception, infections, back pain and headaches.”

While 29 per cent of regional Queenslanders want their GP clinics to remain stand-alone doctor’s practices, most respondents (71 per cent) want a broader range of on-site services offered in the future.

“This includes services such as x-rays, scans and other imaging, physiotherapy, pharmacy, psychologists or counsellors,” Dr Dhupelia said.

“The survey confirms not only where GPs add value to their community during their consultations, but also how they can improve the delivery of healthcare in the future. Regional Queenslanders clearly value the skill of GPs in their local areas.”

Dr Dhupelia said AMA had been urging the Federal Government to lift the ban that currently prevented pharmacists from co-locating in GP clinics as part of stringent pharmacy ownership and location laws.

“Relaxing these rules will improve access and delivery of health care for patients and improve convenience, especially for regional and rural Queenslanders who often travel long see their GP,” he said.

Dr Dhupelia said AMA Queensland also supported the Commonwealth Government’s and Pharmacy Board of Australia’s preference for supervised prescribing within primary health care services, a model that would allow pharmacists to work closely with doctors in GP practices for improved patient care.

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