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Doctors issue call to arms for patients over politics

Doctors are outraged by a State Government trial allowing pharmacists to diagnose urinary tract infections and prescribe antibiotics.

Australian Medical Association (AMA) Queensland has issued a call to arms for doctors to unite against the increasing introduction of role substitutions that allow other health practitioners to deliver services traditionally provided by qualified doctors.

AMA Queensland President Dr Chris Perry said role substitutions delivered patients with inferior care under the guise of convenience.

“AMA Queensland has consistently and regularly voiced its concerns and fears for patient safety regarding task substitutions, however, our voice has for some reason fallen on deaf ears,” he said.

“Queensland is the only state or territory in the country to allow a trial where pharmacists can diagnose urinary tract infections instead of GPs, and sell anti-biotics over the counter without conducting any tests to be sure there is an infection, and at a time when the country is facing a serious problem of antibiotic resistance because of over-prescribing.

“We have a health system which favours a midwife-led childbirth model over the use of obstetricians because the State Government will not pay for rural and regional women to have the same access to labour, delivery and post-natal services as their city-living sisters.

“And we have public patients with referrals to specialists being diverted instead to other health practitioners as a means of cost-cutting and creating an impression that people are waiting less time in the public system for care.

“Queenslanders are being sold this new style of patient care under the guise of choice and convenience, but it’s simply a bargain basement version of health care.”

Dr Perry said AMA Queensland was calling on all doctors to unite to put patient care above political point-scoring and cost-cutting.

“AMA Queensland has consistently and regularly voiced its concerns and fears for patient safety regarding task substitutions, however, our voice has for some reason fallen on deaf ears,” he said.

“Enough is enough. We believe there are serious risks in providing this kind of inferior patient care.”

Dr Perry said AMA Queensland had called on all doctors to complete a survey about the state of the current health care system and what’s required for the future.

“Doctors are extremely concerned about the direction of our health care system and we are providing them with an opportunity to voice their concerns,” he said.

“Apart from the inherent risks in having health practitioners without training providing services of qualified doctors, there’s a genuine danger of a two-tiered health system forming – one that is run on the cheap by clinicians operating outside their scope of practice, and another one that provides quality care for those who are able and willing to pay for it.”

Dr Perry urged doctors to have their say at qld.ama.com.au

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