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Doctors warn new laws endanger the lives of Queenslanders

New drug protocols announced today that allow pharmacists to dispense a wider range of medications and to substitute drugs without consulting a GP endanger the lives of Queenslanders, doctors have warned.

Australian Medical Association (AMA) Queensland Councillor Dr Nick Yim said new amendments, announced by Health Minister Steven Miles, were unnecessary and dangerous.

“Without any consultation with doctors, Mr Miles has made amendments that empower pharmacists to prescribe a wide range of medications, including for people with chronic illnesses, without consulting a doctor,” Dr Yim said.

“These new powers for pharmacists have been cloaked as emergency COVID-19 measures and yet access to GP appointments has never been better with telehealth consultations now available and able to be bulk billed.”

Dr Yim, who used to be a pharmacist before becoming a GP, said it was also concerning that Mr Miles announced pharmacists would be empowered to provide COVID-19 vaccinations when they became available.

“We are yet to find out the make-up of the vaccine, any potential side effects and whether it will impact people with particular health conditions,” Dr Yim said.

“While it is vital the COVID-19 vaccine is distributed as quickly as possible - once it becomes available in 12 or 18 months – it is premature and irresponsible to announce now that pharmacists will distribute it.”

AMA Queensland President Dr Dilip Dhupelia said pharmacists played a vital role in working collaboratively with GPs but they had an inherent conflict of interest in providing medical care to patients.

“Pharmacies are commercial businesses and it is in their interest to sell as much as they can to each person who walks through their door,” Dr Dhupelia said.

“We urge Mr Miles to reconsider these amendments and would welcome the opportunity to explain our concerns with him.

“Queenslanders deserve to feel confident their State Government is protecting their health, not placing it in danger.”

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