

Building Australia's Health System for the Future

Statement on health system priorities
for the Australian health system

June 2016



RACMA
The Royal Australasian College
of Medical Administrators



From the President



Health care is innovating because of emerging technologies, serial governance reform, and pressures from rising demand and tightening national budgets. Within this change, it is important for Australia's health care system to be safe, equitable, for practice to be well governed, and care must be appropriate and informed by evidence. Above all, the health system must be sustainable.

Achieving this requires a strategic approach and visionary leadership.

Strong clinical management by a highly talented workforce is required to accomplish this future.

As a specialist medical college we will continue to lead and train the specialist workforce so that they can provide strong governance of health services and assure provision of quality and safe health care for all Australians. The Royal Australasian College of Medical Administrators looks forward to working with Australia's policy makers to build Australia's health system for the future.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Cleary". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Professor Michael Cleary
President

“ Strong clinical management by a highly talented workforce is required to accomplish this future. ”



**The Royal Australasian College of
Medical Administrators has identified
five priorities for building Australia's
health system for the future**



Building Australia's Health System for the Future

Increasing demand for health care driven by population growth, ageing demographic, a rising incidence of chronic disease, and the application of new diagnostic and treatment technologies coupled with increasing constraints in resourcing the health system is continuing to drive change in Australia's health system.

Responding to these pressures and opportunities requires a strategic approach that extends beyond the traditional notion of health care delivery. Visionary leadership, strong governance, and effective clinical engagement and management are prerequisites for a successful future.

The Royal Australasian College of Medical Administrators (RACMA) has identified five priorities for building Australia's health system for the future. These are:

- 1** Implement a strategic approach to the health system
- 2** Assure care is appropriate and safe through effective clinical governance
- 3** Implement effective health workforce structures
- 4** Translate clinical research into practice
- 5** Provide for a sustainable health system.

The Royal Australasian College of Medical Administrators (RACMA) is the peak standards setting and training body for specialist medical management and leadership. Fellows of RACMA use the medical and clinical knowledge, skill and judgement of medical practitioners combined with post graduate leadership and management training to significantly impact the health and safety of the public, and the efficiency and effectiveness of the health system as a whole.

The core capability of the Fellows and Associate Fellows of RACMA is a detailed understanding of the system from both a clinical and a management perspective. As such RACMA is in a position to work with policy makers to influence, facilitate and establish change that will build Australia's health system for the future.

Implement a strategic approach to the health system

Providing appropriate care to the Australian population is challenged by:

- Disparities with some populations accessing appropriate care
- Changing disease patterns, including a high prevalence of chronic disease
- An increasing need to take a longer term, evidence based planning horizon for future health.

Responding to the challenge requires reorienting the health system from acute to primary care, utilising data and technology to more effectively deliver care and to enhance health outcomes for different populations, while ensuring the workforce is able to deliver care when and where it is needed.

Policy makers should...

- Adopt a strategic approach that defines populations at risk, and how these risks and inequities can be addressed
- Progress the role of Primary Health Networks and the Healthier Medicare Initiative¹ to provide more effective care in community based settings
- Further invest in providing electronic health systems to both facilitate the delivery of care across settings and geographies, and to further inform the development of more effective health care
- Invest in programs for better equipping the health workforce to deliver care to better meet demand where and in the way it is needed

Where RACMA can assist...

RACMA's Fellows and Associate Fellows are able to work within the health system to support effective change. Within the specialist expertise of medical administration, they are able to work across domains to develop effective solutions.

Assure care is appropriate and safe through effective clinical governance

A core expectation of the community is that care received is effective and that it does not cause harm. But delivering care that is effective and harm free is complex, as there are risks with medical care that can result in unexpected outcomes. Medical advances means what is not treatable and avoidable today, may be treatable and avoidable in the future.

Clinical governance is at the core of effective, harm free care delivery. The systems of all health services **must have strong clinical governance to provide accountability to underpin safe and effective care.**

Complex health systems are not without adverse events. Adverse events serve to highlight instances where clinical governance systems have not worked as they should. In particular, they highlight:

- When clinical governance is delivered as an activity, undertaken variably, or is under resourced in an organisation, which results in the organisation having limited capacity to reveal and respond immediately to potential and actual safety issues
- A system of clinical governance may exist, however, senior staff and corporate governance bodies with organisational oversight of the health services may not have the necessary expertise to respond effectively.

The oversight of effective systems for clinical governance requires technical expertise and medical leadership.

Policy makers should...

- Improve the design of, and the requirements for national standards for effective clinical governance, and ensure that all health services are accredited against rigorous standards
- Increase the transparency of the relative performance of all health services from the perspective of quality of care

Where RACMA can assist...

RACMA Fellows and Associate Fellows possess the technical skills and knowledge to implement and oversight clinical governance systems.

Implement effective health workforce structures

While additional Government funding in recent years has led to an improvement in the number of trainees and medical practitioners, there remains under-supply in selected specialties and maldistribution between major cities compared to regional and remote areas.

Access to timely and appropriate care for rural and regional populations is impacted by this maldistribution, and there is significant need to incentivise a clinical and medical workforce to work, supervise and train doctors in rural and regional Australia.

The answer therefore lies not only in supporting further increases to the size of the specialist medical workforce, but also in **creative re-engineering of care models and clinical workforce capabilities to support collaborative teams**.

Policy makers should...

- Provide targeted support for clinical and medical training to communities most in need, and incentivise communities and practitioners to enhance retention, service collaboration and coverage
- Acknowledge the specialty expertise of medical administrators and facilitate detailed workforce planning to underpin the clinical governance requirements for Australia's health system
- Prioritise implementation of recommendations described in the recent Review of Medical Intern Training²

Where RACMA can assist...

RACMA advocates that medical practitioners and specialists working in senior medical management roles should have access to training and continuing professional development that **meets the appropriate standards for professional medical management**. RACMA provides the requisite training and governance oversight to support the workforce development and governance of health services.

Translate clinical research into practice

The Strategic Review into Health and Medical Research⁹ found that simply increasing health care expenditure did not necessarily lead to improved health outcomes.

However, while there is ground breaking research concerning clinical practice in Australia's research community, there are barriers to translating this research into evidence based clinical and health system interventions.

Translating research into practice comes at a cost, but the benefits can be substantial.

The Commonwealth Government has established the Medical Research Future Fund to strategically fund research consistent with national health and medical research priorities. Integrated health research centres, in the form of translational research institutes and academic health science centres, are increasing. However, further work is required to progress the **embedding of research into health care practice to ensure Australians reap the benefits of the investment in health research through better health outcomes.**

Policy makers should...

- Expand funding for translational research so it informs clinical practice and delivers improved outcomes in the delivery of care
- Increase the proportion of research funding available to support collaborations for translational research between universities, centres of excellence and post graduate training organisations like RACMA

Where RACMA can assist...

Doctors training to be specialists in medical management and leadership through RACMA undertake training in health services evaluation research which is derived from their workplace experiences. These specialist medical trainees will benefit from participation in collaborative health services and translational research programs.

Provide a sustainable health system for the future

There are initiatives underway to reduce waste, including Choosing Wisely. However, more needs to be done to address the core issues affecting waste within the health system. This can include the way the health system is organised, funded and resourced.

Policy makers should...

- Progressively implement recommendations from reviews to reduce waste in the health system in collaboration with the medical and health community
- Support initiatives to reduce waste in health care, including activities such as Choosing Wisely
- Ensure that initiatives to reduce and contain health care expenditure does not come at the cost of limiting access to health services or the safe provision of care

Where RACMA can assist...

RACMA expertise can be utilised to **work with policy makers to build a better and sustainable health care system** for the future of Australia.

RACMA Fellows assist policy makers by informing high level reviews, such as the MBS Review Taskforce, Medical Board of Australia reviews, quality and safety standards setting by national and jurisdictional regulators and accreditation organisations, commissions and inquiries.



References

- 1 The Healthier Medicare Package was announced on 31 March 2016. It includes: Trialling a model of care where patients voluntarily enrol with a single provider and the provider is responsible for ongoing coordination and management of care (including bundled funding arrangements rather than fee for service); digital health measures to improve patient access and efficiency; and developing stronger data collection, measurement and evaluation tools to allow patient's individual progress to be measured and a minimum data set for benchmarking primary health care performance. Source: "A Healthier Medicare for Chronically Ill Patients", Media Release by Prime Minister and Minister of Health, 31 March 2016.
- 2 Source: Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council, "Review of Medical Intern Training Final Report", September 2015
- 3 Source: "Strategic Review of Health and Medical Research in Australia 2013 Final Report", Department of Health and Ageing, 2013



RACMA

The Royal Australasian College
of Medical Administrators

The Royal Australasian College of Medical Administrators

A.C.N. 004 688 215

10/1 Milton Parade, Malvern, Victoria 3144

Telephone +61 3 9824 4699

Facsimile +61 3 9824 6806

Email info@racma.edu.au

Web www.racma.edu.au