

Media release

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Scope of practice review should prioritise safe, collaborative, patient-centered primary care

Avant Mutual, Australia's largest medical indemnity insurer supporting over 80,000 doctors, today said quality healthcare must prioritise patient safety over processes and tasks following a proposal to enable more primary health practitioners to assume responsibilities traditionally performed by doctors.

The Federal Government's Scope of Practice Review issued its second issues paper, proposing a range of reforms to empower primary health practitioners, including nurses, pharmacists, and allied health professionals, to expand their scope of work in primary care.

The review is solely dedicated to primary care, with a focus on assessing both the opportunities and risks associated with empowering practitioners to operate at the peak of their scope of practice and to enhance the accessibility of healthcare services.

"While Avant applauds the review's acknowledgment of practitioner insurance coverage, technological improvements and funding models, a greater consideration of patient safety is needed," Avant Chief Medical Officer Dr Michael Wright said.

"Removing barriers so that primary health professionals can work to their full or expanded scope can enhance access to health care. However, it's crucial to acknowledge the potential risks associated with these changes.

"As practitioners take on broader scopes of practice, there is an increased risk of primary care fragmentation and potential for misdiagnosis, inappropriate treatments and medical errors.

"These are complex issues that warrant careful consideration to ensure patient safety remains paramount. We support a model that taps the strengths of all primary healthcare practitioners within a collaborative team led by the expertise of a GP."

Dr Wright said there was a danger in reducing primary healthcare down to a series of tasks and processes and ignoring the realities and complexities associated with holistic patient care.

"Patients are not merely collections of symptoms to be treated; they are individuals with unique needs and circumstances," he said.

"We cannot stress enough the importance of acknowledging and addressing these complexities in the next stage of the review."

About Avant

Avant Mutual is a member-owned doctors' organisation and Australia's largest medical indemnity insurer, committed to supporting a sustainable health system that provides quality care to the Australian community. Our 86,000 members (more than half of Australia's doctors) are from all medical specialities and career stages and from every state and territory. Our products and services in the areas of insurance, lending, health and legal and practice management are all designed to support doctors in their professional and personal lives.

For further information, please visit www.avant.org.au

Media

Suzanne Mercer
Mobile: +61 408 795 015
Email: suzanne.mercer@avant.org.au

Avant Mutual Group Limited

Telephone +61 2 9260 9000