



Australian Health Care Reform Alliance

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MEDIA RELEASE

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Call for medical specialists to disclose fees

The Australian Healthcare Reform Alliance (AHCRA) has supported calls for specialist fees to be made public and urged the Government to consider further action to reduce medical gap payments.

AHCRA is a coalition of peak health organisations working together to create a better and fairer health system for Australia's future.

"AHCRA supports the call from the Consumers Health Forum of Australia (CHF) to require medical specialists to list their fees publicly," AHCRA Chair Jennifer Doggett said today.

"Recently released research on specialist fees demonstrates how wide the variation is in fees, with some consumers paying up to five times as much as others for the same scheduled service. Given that medical specialists have much of their education, training and service provision paid for by the public purse we believe their fees should be reasonable and transparent.

"It is impossible for consumers to make informed choices about their health care when they are unable to compare the costs of different providers. In every other area of life consumers are able to compare prices before they buy and medical services should not be any different.

"Publishing the fees will increase transparency into the system and may also result in a reduction in the current high level of variation within specialties.

"Reducing high out of pocket payments should be a high priority for government as there is widespread evidence that many people avoid essential health care because of cost. This is inequitable and also can result in higher costs over the long term as people delay treatment until health problems become more serious.

"AHCRA calls on the Government to take action in this area, including considering CHF's proposal for an independent and authoritative website to list medical specialists' fees and performance data. This could enable consumers to make meaningful comparisons between providers, on the basis of quality, cost or other relevant factors, and support them to choose the most appropriate option.

"We also support considering other proposals, such as removing eligibility for Medicare rebates from those specialists who choose not to have their fees and performance published or whose fees are determined by an independent body to be excessively high," Ms Doggett said.

For further information or comment: Jennifer Doggett 0403 325 980

**AHCRA is a coalition of health groups, including consumer, provider and service delivery organisations, working together to improve the health system for Australia's future.*