

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH PORTFOLIO

Budget Estimates 2017 - 2018, 29 May 2017

Ref No: SQ17-001035

OUTCOME: 2 - Health Access and Support Services

Topic: After Hours GP Services

Type of Question: Written Question on Notice

Senator: Di Natale, Richard

Question:

- a) What are the current requirements for after hours clinic services and after hours home visit services (medical deputising services) to provide reporting of clinical notes to the patient's regular GP?
- b) What impediments exist to make this reporting more difficult – isn't it true that some GP practices still require files to be faxed?
- c) Is there a reportable quality of care issue relating to who is delivering these services? What data exists to suggest people receive lower quality of care?

Answer:

- a) Arrangements for transferring patient information are negotiated by general practices when they make business arrangements with medical deputising services and other after-hours providers. The Commonwealth does not govern these private arrangements and therefore cannot apply a standard requirement for transferring patient information to all after-hours providers.

Some medical deputising services choose to participate on the Commonwealth-administered Approved Medical Deputising Service (AMDS) Program. The Program Guidelines compel each AMDS to provide continuity of care by:

- providing a Patient Report for each deputised attendance to the patient's GP in a timely manner;
- retaining a duplicate Patient Record available to the patient's GP should it be required;
- providing a mechanism for the GPs they partner with to provide a patient's medical history prior to a deputised attendance; and
- ensuring the transfer of information is secured according to national standards.

Under the PIP After Hours Incentive where a cooperative or formal third party care arrangement is applicable, the arrangements must make sure notes of consultations and information about the care provided are sent back to the practice, with patient consent, by the next day. Patients' digital health records in the My Health Record system may be used to transfer this information through an event summary.

- b) The Department does not have visibility of the individual business agreements between practices and their partners. However, the Department is committed to supporting practices and encouraging the use of electronic systems.

The PIP eHealth Incentive aims to encourage general practices to keep up to date with the latest developments in digital health and adopt new digital health technology as it becomes available. It aims to help practices improve administration processes and patient care.

To be eligible for the PIP eHealth Incentive practices must meet eligibility requirements that support the direction of the Australian Government's My Health Record Strategy which includes the use of compliant software to electronically transmit and receive clinical messages to and from other healthcare providers.

- c) Medical Deputising Services must be accredited to the current Royal Australian College of General Practitioners Standards for General Practice, including supplementary materials for after hours care services.

Achieving independent accreditation against the Standards demonstrates a commitment to providing high quality, safe and effective care to standards of excellence determined by the general practice profession.

The model of care offered by a Medical Deputising Service differs from that of General Practice making it difficult to directly compare quality of care. The Department is not aware of any data which explores this issue.