

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH PORTFOLIO

Supplementary Budget Estimates 2015 - 2016, 21 October 2015

Ref No: SQ15-000776

OUTCOME: 8 - Health Workforce Capacity

Topic: Medical Practitioners

Type of Question: Written Question on Notice

Senator: Madigan, John

Question:

It is unethical to victimise medical practitioners who are using their knowledge and skills to help patients the rest of the medical system has abandoned. While medical boards and mainstream medical peers victimise medical practitioners treating patients with such pathogenic illnesses as tick-borne disease, patients have been very restrained in not lodging malpractice complaints against the mainstream doctors who have made terrible and dangerous errors of judgement in the course of their care.

- a) Apart from the fact that the medical boards would become too busy to victimise the medical practitioners treating pathogenic illnesses, why should patients not systematically set about lodging malpractice complaints against all the mainstream medical practitioners who have made serious and dangerous errors of judgement in the course of the patients' attempts to access medical assistance?
- b) Where are the guidelines and protocol for GPs who find that no specialists will take on and manage the care of their seriously ill patients?
- c) Patients are distressed at their treating doctors' patient notes being seized. This is an unacceptable invasion of their privacy. There are no regulations on the treatment of many of the conditions that these doctors are attempting to treat. When will the DoH provide guidelines and education for Australian medical practitioners on the orphan diseases and the diseases here but yet unnamed?

Answer:

- a) If a member of the public has any concerns about the safety of a doctor's practice, they are able to lodge a notification to the Medical Board of Australia (MBA). Once received the MBA will commence an investigation and make a decision on whether it is appropriate to take any action, in the interest of public safety, in relation to the doctor's registration.
- b) The MBA's Good medical practice: *A code of conduct for doctors in Australia* describes what is expected of all doctors registered to practice in Australia. It makes explicit the standards of ethical and professional conduct expected of doctors by their professional peers and the community.
- c) In the context of Lyme disease the department has made information available to medical practitioners and the public on its Lyme disease webpage www.health.gov.au/lyme-disease