



Comment on the Interim Report: Review of
Pharmacy Remuneration and Regulation

Submission to the Review of Pharmacy Remuneration and Regulation Interim Report

ConNetica Consulting would like to thank the review board for accepting public comment on the Interim Report released in June 2017. ConNetica Consulting has undertaken several large-scale health service mapping projects across Australia, creating Atlases of Health Care for the entire state of Western Australia (mental health and alcohol and other drug services), and for several Primary Health Networks (PHNs) in Victoria (mental health, alcohol and other drug and homelessness services), New South Wales (mental health and chronic conditions including diabetes mellitus, cardiovascular disease and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease), and Queensland (mental health and alcohol and other drug services).

The call for an Atlas of Community Pharmacies in the Interim Report (Option 2-5: Pharmacy Atlas, p. 42) is one that is welcomed by ConNetica. ConNetica sees the utility of a Pharmacy Atlas for consumers in the community, however we also believe that an atlas of community pharmacies can enable increased service integration across several health domains, chronic and acute, and highlight the crucial role pharmacists play in the primary health care of all Australians.

Therefore, in our submission and response to the Interim Report, ConNetica would like to outline several key benefits of a pharmacy atlas, a) for the consumer, b) for service planning, design and integration, and c) for broader linkages with health data. It is hoped that an argument for a pharmacy atlas can be further strengthened, and the impetus for its creation and utilisation broadened to incorporate all parties in the health care ecosystem.

Benefits for the Consumer

In the Interim Report, it was stated that consumers are often unaware of the range of services provided by community pharmacies, the mechanisms of accessing services and medications, and various education and preventative health programs available from community pharmacy (p. 41). This has historically been true of other health service domains. For example, the type of care provided by mental health services is often not explicitly stated in service directories, making it difficult for consumers who may be unwell to navigate, access and engage with mental health services. We applaud the interim report for recognising this shortfall in service information.

Clear and consumer friendly information is a necessity. However, it is now widely accepted that a health system cannot effectively prevent, treat and work toward recovery of an individual's physical and mental health without sophisticated integration and interoperability. The information gathered as part of a pharmacy atlas would benefit from integration with other primary and tertiary health atlases. This would enhance the consumer experience by assisting them to understand what services are available to them at all stages of care. Such integration and information exchange would create an unprecedented level of service knowledge for the consumer, but also for the broader health system.

Benefits for the Health System

We know that pathways between health services can often be fragmented and unreliable. Furthermore, health care has grown in complexity as co- and multi-morbidity of health concerns continue to grow in the Australian population. Such complexity requires a significant level of care coordination, care linkage and a sophisticated understanding of the 'landscape of care' available in the community and health system. Community pharmacies will increasingly need to be a part of this care framework, and understanding the services they provide will be essential for other health service providers and planners.

As an example, the individual being discharged from hospital after a stay related to diabetes complications will need to be connected with ongoing care in their community. For the multidisciplinary discharge team within a hospital, understanding whether the individual's regular pharmacy provides

medication packing and medication compliance counselling services would be invaluable, particularly as the community pharmacy is a more regular point of contact than their General Practitioner (GP). Furthermore, the utility of detailed community pharmacy service information would also benefit local GPs. For the GP working with a patient taking multiple medications, the ability to quickly and easily identify which local pharmacies provide medication checks and other health services (as found in Guild Care) would be invaluable.

Benefits of a Pharmacy Atlas when Linked with other Health Data

As part of ConNetica's health service atlases, health data is presented and linked with service provision. A key example of this is the mapping of diabetes mellitus prevalence across health catchments. By doing this we can first identify where the greatest need for services are, map the available services across a health catchment, and subsequently identify where there may be service gaps. By linking a pharmacy atlas to health data, it would be possible to quickly and easily identify pharmacies that could provide additional services to the community to meet a community's specific needs. For example, if a Local Government Area had a high incidence of Diabetes Mellitus, yet no pharmacies within that catchment provided diabetes screening and follow-up services, a gap in essential preventative health care would be identified. This information, too, would be highly useful for other local services, including GPs. For those living in rural and remote populations where service provision may be severely lacking, understanding where pharmacies could offer preventative health care would be of considerable benefit to these communities.

Closing

Again, we would like to thank the review for accepting comment on the Interim Report. ConNetica sees community pharmacy as an important component of a modern, innovative and integrated health care system. We believe an Atlas of Community Pharmacy will significantly benefit the consumer, but has great potential for also shaping the future of health care in Australia.

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