

Australia General Practitioners (GP) Super Clinics Health Promotion

Section I: Summary

Launched by the Australian government, the General Practitioner Super Clinics are intended to make health care more accessible by providing a broad range of health services in one location. These one stop shops intend to increase resident access to services particularly in areas that are currently underserved by health professionals. By combining services in a centralized location, the clinics aim to attract doctors, specialist and health professionals to communities where they are needed most. Clinics also seek to improve delivery of prevention health services and chronic disease management requiring multidisciplinary care.

Section II: Statement of purpose

Rationale

GP Super Clinics bring together multi-disciplinary providers and encourages them to adopt best practice, integrated, team-based approaches while efficiently and effectively using technology to improve patient health. GP Super Clinics provide a greater focus on chronic disease prevention and management, as well as economies of scale in delivering high quality health care.

While it is likely that GP Super Clinics will take pressure off local public hospitals, all patients will retain their right, under the Australian Health Care Agreements, to attend public hospitals and emergency departments at no cost if they so wish. Services provided at GP Super Clinics will be provided under the usual fee for service arrangements.

GP Super Clinics are also designed to help address one of the key areas of inefficiency and duplication in our health system by improving integration between Commonwealth funded primary care services and State and Territory funded services, both community health and hospital.

GP Super Clinics may also provide a high quality clinical training environment for medical, nursing and allied health professional students and new graduates, in addition to prevocational doctors and GP registrars.

The GP Super Clinics are intended to:

- Provide a greater focus for tackling the challenge of chronic diseases.
- Be more convenient for patients.
- Help take the pressure off hospitals.
- Support preventative care efforts.

Funding

The Australian Government has committed \$223 million over four years, starting in 2007-08, to establish GP Super Clinics in 31 localities across Australia. The funding will be used for

- Building facilities to house the multidisciplinary and integrated primary care
- Upgrading training facilities
- Funding to support administrative costs including shared health records and practice managers (recurrent)
- Reimbursing practitioners relocation costs -- AUD15,000 per practitioner (These funds are additional to existing incentives to encourage GPs to move to under-served regions)
- Incentives for allied health professionals to relocate

To encourage preventative and health management, GP Super Clinics will be provided with incentives not to charge patients out-of-pocket costs.

Section III: Expected Outcomes

The Government has not established a process for monitoring or evaluating the impact of GP super clinics although an evaluation will likely measure the impact of clinics on GP access and utilization using administrative data. It will be harder to measure patient health outcomes and service use outside those subsidized through public health services program (e.g. community services) or the super clinics impact on reducing pressure on hospital emergency departments.

There is little doubt the Super Clinic will help communities underserved by GPs. Previous federal governments have enacted a number of initiatives to overcome this misdistribution but few initiatives been unable to shift current workforce distributions. The GP Super Clinics should offer a more supportive and cohesive working environment which will attract GPs to underserved areas.

The government also argues this policy will help shift the primary care from short consultations to more comprehensive care focusing on chronic care and prevention. Although the availability of multidisciplinary specialist care at GP Super Clinics will broaden the range of primary care services available to patients, the open ended fee-for-service payment structure of Medicare funding will continue to encourage GP services over other types of specialist services funded on a salaried or capped basis.

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