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AIHW diseases burden data underlines pressing need for investment in health

In the wake of data showing more Australians are living longer with chronic disease, the Australian Medical Association has renewed calls on the federal government to invest more in the health of all Australians.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) released its *Australian Burden of Disease Study 2022* today showing more Australians are living longer with the burden of chronic disease.

AMA President Professor Stephen Robson said the increase in the number of people living with chronic disease is further burdening an already overstretched health system — from primary care settings to hospitals and aged care.

“We see this play out day after day across our entire health system with people unable to access the primary care they need when they need it and ending up in our hospitals as a result,” Professor Robson said.

“One of the startling figures to come out of this report is the fact that anxiety disorders are now in the top five diseases creating a burden on the health system. This is particularly affecting young people.

“We need investment in preventative care across the board, particularly in mental health if we are to prevent more and more patients unnecessarily ending up in hospitals as revealed in the AMA’s recent [public hospital report card \(mental health edition\)](#). Hospitals are not the right place for these and other patients who could be treated in the community with the right support.”

Professor Robson said GPs, who are at the forefront of managing these chronic conditions have not received the support they need from successive governments.

“The healthcare needs of patients have become more complex as the population has aged, yet Medicare is stuck in the 1980s. As outlined in the [AMA’s plan to Modernise Medicare](#), we need serious reform to put general practice on a more sustainable footing, capable of delivering the type of care that patients now need.”

Professor Robson said better resourced GPs would allow GP clinics to open after hours and help take pressure off logjammed hospital emergency departments.

“Now more than ever patients need to be able to spend time with their GP to ensure their health conditions are properly assessed and treated.”

The AMA’s seven-point plan to improve access to GPs (part of the Modernise Medicare campaign) includes calls for support for general practice to spend more time with patients with chronic diseases including by:

- supporting general practice to deliver more care after hours
- expanding the number of nurses and allied health services available in general practices
- supporting GPs to provide care to aged-care residents
- supporting GPs to provide evidence-based wound care to those patients with chronic wounds
- changing the GP training program to make general practice more appealing to the next generation of doctors
- supporting GPs to spend more time with patients and improve the indexation of Medicare to reflect the rising costs of providing high-quality medical care and running a medical practice
- the introduction of voluntary patient enrolment so patients can register with their trusted general practice or “medical home”, to bolster coordinated, multidisciplinary, and patient-centred care.

Contact: AMA Media: +61 427 209 753 | media@ama.com.au

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