

Wednesday, 26 April 2023

Two month prescribing a welcome win for consumers facing cost of living increases

The federal government's announcement today that two month dispensing with only a single patient co-payment will be permitted for 325 medicines is very welcome, and will provide immediate relief for consumers battling with increases to the cost of living.

Australian Medical Association President Professor Steve Robson said the AMA had been calling for the change since it was recommended by the independent expert Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee (PBAC) in 2018. The decision will also allow up to 12 months' supply in total from a single script, also saving patients an extra trip to the doctor.

"This is terrific news for consumers taking these medications, as they will now be able to visit the chemist once every two months instead of every month, but still pay a single copayment - instead of visiting and paying each and every month," Professor Robson said.

"We know patients are struggling to afford essential medicines as cost-of-living increases continue to bite the household budget and research tells us some patients are skipping medicines because of this — that just shouldn't be happening.

"Today's announcement effectively halves the costs of these medicines for patients, and means more affordable medicines now are a reality for these patients.

"It will deliver a significant saving to patients of up to \$180 a year per selected medicine, potentially also save the taxpayer, and upholds the independence of the PBAC process. The AMA commends the government on this smart, triple win policy."

Patient safety has been taken into account, with any decision to prescribe two months' supply requiring a clinical assessment by the patient's doctor, ensuring the patient is stable and suitable.

The AMA also acknowledges the government announcement that the new measure will be implemented in three stages.

"While the government has in place strong monitoring mechanisms regarding medication supply, the decision to stage the introduction will also ensure a smooth transition to the new arrangements.

"It's also important to note that this decision was made based on the recommendation of an independent body of experts – including from pharmacy – and backed by the Department of Health, which has considered patient safety, supply and cost considerations. Today's decision is therefore a win for patients who have struggled with cost, and the logistics of getting medicines every month. It should lead to better medicines adherence and ultimately better health outcomes, with reduced pressure on the health system," Professor Robinson said.

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

Follow the AMA Media on Twitter: twitter.com/ama_media

Follow the AMA President on Twitter: twitter.com/amapresident

Like the AMA on Facebook facebook.com/AustralianMedicalAssociation