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DOCTORS MUST HAVE KEY ROLE IN HEALTH FINANCING AND FUNDING

AMA Position Statement on the Role of Doctors in Stewardship of Healthcare Financing and Funding Arrangements 2016

The AMA today released its new *Position Statement on the Role of Doctors in Stewardship of Healthcare Financing and Funding Arrangements 2016*.

Stewardship of health financing and funding means ensuring health funding is directed to achieving health outcomes, does not have adverse impacts or involve wasteful expenditure, and is sustainable and able to meet future needs.

AMA President, Dr Michael Gannon, said today that, without the clinical stewardship perspective, there is a significant risk that health policy decisions will be driven primarily by government financing and political perspectives ahead of positive public health outcomes.

“As the key clinicians and health care providers, doctors have a direct interest in the overall resourcing, performance, and sustainability of health care,” Dr Gannon said.

“This involves ensuring that health financing, funding, and expenditure are managed to ensure resources are available for health needs currently and into the future.

“Adequate and sustainable resourcing is an essential and critical condition for the provision of clinical care.

“Doctors must have an active role in the operation of healthcare financing and funding processes, and be involved in decisions on the allocation of resources at the health system level.

“Doctors bring a practical and informed perspective from the real world of their clinical practice to health financing and funding decisions.

“When major health decisions are taken without clinical involvement, the results are often sub-optimal and unsustainable, as seen recently with GP co-payments, the Medicare indexation freeze, and cuts to public hospital funding.”

The stewardship role of doctors includes:

- considering and advising on how healthcare proposals will work, or not work, from a clinical perspective;
- identifying what positive and negative impacts a proposal may have on clinical care, including its ‘fit’ with clinical workflow and the practical operation of medical practices;
- impacts of the proposal on the wider health system, including unforeseen and adverse impacts;
- sustainability of the proposal – are patient needs/demand, costs, and performance manageable over time; and
- overall, to what extent does or will the proposal contribute to improved health outcomes, and how will this be measured?

The role of doctors in stewardship of healthcare financing and funding must be explicitly recognised by governments. Doctor representatives must have access to information and data, including:

- access to up-to-date information on the current performance of health care overall, and detailed information about the specific area covered by the proposal under consideration;
- a clear statement on the need for change that the proposal is addressing;
- an analysis of factors currently influencing health care in the area concerned, including trends, pressures, and costs; and
- a clear statement of what is proposed, including expected impacts, forecast costs, and how performance will be assessed.

The AMA *Position Statement on the Role of Doctors in Stewardship of Healthcare Financing and Funding Arrangements 2016* is available at <https://ama.com.au/position-statement/role-doctors-stewardship-health-financing-and-funding-arrangements-2016>

This Position Statement complements the AMA *Position Statement on the Doctor's Role in Stewardship of Health Care Resources 2016*, also released today, which is available at <https://ama.com.au/position-statement/doctors-role-stewardship-health-care-resources-2016>

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