

Complementary medicines could be key to treating chronic diseases

Nick O'Donoghue

AUSTRALIAN research shows patients with chronic health diseases who use complementary and alternative medicines (CAMs) are more confident in managing their conditions.

The study led by researchers from Monash University, Melbourne, revealed people with type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular conditions who consulted with CAM practitioners feel they were more knowledgeable about managing their illness.

Leader of the Complementary and Alternative Medicine, Economics, Lifestyle and Other Therapeutic approaches for chronic conditions (CAMELOT) project, medical anthropologist Professor Lenore Manderson believes the use of complementary approaches should not be overlooked when treating chronic diseases.

"The survey results so far indicate that most people who consult with CAM practitioners believe the treatment relieves their symptoms (74 per cent), increases their knowledge about

their problem (60 per cent), and makes them feel more confident about managing their condition (56 per cent).

"Given these results and efforts being made to educate the public to better manage their health, it may be an oversight to overlook CAM in the current national health reform agenda," Prof Manderson said.

The majority of people with chronic conditions who use CAMs do so in conjunction with pharmaceutical treatments and do not tell their doctor, because of the belief their doctor would

not support the complementary treatment.

"A common reason for not informing doctors is because of a perception that doctors are anti-CAM.

"This suggests that there is some way to go to build better understanding between the medical profession and the growing CAM industry," she said.

The study estimated that 70 per cent of the Australian population use CAMs ranging from vitamin supplements to spiritual healing and acupuncture.

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AIHW report shows increases in mental health medication prescribing

Nick O'Donoghue

THE NUMBER of prescriptions filled for people with mental illnesses rose for the first time in three years, *Australia's Health 2010 Report* revealed.

Contrasting with previous years, the report found 21.4 million prescriptions had been filled for mental health problems under the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) and the Repatriation Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (RPBS) in 2008/2009, compared with 20.4 million in 2007/2008.

Spending on mental health medications in the 2008/2009 period accounted for 10 per cent of the total paid out by the PBS and RPBS, amounting to \$743



PRESCRIBING: Government spending on prescription medications increased by 7.7 per cent.

million or \$34 for every Australian.

Of the 21.4 million prescriptions paid for by the PBS and RPBS, more than half (12.3 million) were for anti-depressants, while the number of hypnotics and sedatives prescribed declined.

"This was in contrast to the decline seen over the previous three years. There

were increases in the number of psychostimulants and nootropics and antipsychotics prescribed.

"On the other hand, prescriptions for hypnotics and sedatives decreased on average by 3.4 per cent per year, while prescriptions for anxiolytics, antidepressants and other medications prescribed

by psychiatrists decreased on average by around one per cent per year," the report said.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) report showed the overall number of prescriptions filled annually increased 46 per cent between 1996 and 2008.

Of the 262 million prescriptions filled in 2008, the PBS provided 179 million and a further 14 million were paid for through the RPBS.

The report revealed a 7.7 per cent growth in spending through the PBS in 2007/2008 compared with 2006/2007, with \$13.72 billion being spent on medicines.

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Guild workforce symposium planned

Nick O'Donoghue

LEADING pharmacy education and industry stakeholders will meet to discuss the findings of the **Pharmacy Guild** of Australia's Pharmacy Workforce Planning Research Project in August.

The research project, published today by the Guild, forecast a “sharp oversupply of pharmacists” by 2025, using a simple and flexible Pharmacy Workforce Planning Model.

The symposium organised by the Guild, will be held at the Realm Hotel in Canberra on 10 August, giving project leader Lee Ridoutt the opportunity to brief stakeholders on its findings.

Running the model for the ‘best estimate’ scenario Mr Ridoutt's research found the supply of graduate pharmacists will grow at a compound rate of 3.2 per cent for the next 15 years, which compares to a forecast increase in demand of 2.4 per cent.

The Guild believes the new model will assist the profession in shaping the future services delivery and influence factors that would most likely deliver a labour

market to support the services delivery vision.

In his regular opinion piece in *Pharmacy eNews* earlier this week, Guild president Kos Sclavos welcomed the development of the new planning model.

“Past planning of the pharmacy workforce has focused on predicting future pharmacist supply and demand.

“This research placed less emphasis on a definitive forecast for the pharmacy labour market, and instead attempted to create a strong and robust platform from which a range of feasible future scenarios could be fashioned and examined.

“The model allows examination of demand and supply through thirty five separate variables each of which has a range of potential values.

“These values have been set as a continuum between reasonable ‘high’ and ‘low’ estimates around a median ‘best estimate’ to form a default or ‘best estimate’ scenario which can be called up by the model and used for generating new scenarios,” he said.

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COMMENTS

PHARMACISTS' WAGES [\(LINK\)](#)

I am a second year pharmacy student, and looking at the negative opinions of some people on the pharmacy career has made me wonder whether people realise that it's not just pharmacy where income is being reduced, a lot of other careers are.

A lot of students also use this degree as a stepping stone into medicine or dentistry, in my class a lot of the students are overseas students and are hoping to go back to America and work as a pharmacist there rather than Australia.

Everyone wants top pay once they graduate but once you are out of university the new challenge begins in the real world.

I am not changing my career because of salary differences or because of people's negative opinions of the profession.

Raj

ONLINE PHARMACIES [\(LINK\)](#)

I urge pharmacists to exert caution before running to create a web presence in order to boost sales. It is important to consider how a web presence can be

part of a complete strategy for a pharmacy and must take into consideration if the pharmacy offering is conducive to web sales. Remember that when moving online, you may lose much of the face-to-face services currently being pushed in pharmacy. In addition, an on-line business will better suit pharmacies established to support a more responsive stock warehousing model. If you're not geared to process stock for on-line businesses, an on-line presence could be more detrimental than beneficial. There are strong cases for establishing a web presence in pharmacy; but for many community pharmacies, a web presence is unlikely to suit the goals of the business and is more likely to distract from the core operations of the business.

Andrew Sirianni

WORKFORCE ISSUES [\(LINK\)](#)

There is certainly an over supply of pharmacy graduates and a real shortage of jobs. I believe in the short term, the intake of pharmacy students should be reduced to ensure quality of students.

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