



MEDIA RELEASE

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First research paper on prosthetics performance released

The recently-established Australian Centre for Health Research (ACHR) today released its first research and discussion paper.

The Centre was established by a number of cross-sectional health industry interests with the aim of commissioning independent research and using the results to promote consultation, discussion and increased understanding.

In Canberra today, the ACHR released its first research paper dealing with the costs of joint surgery and the performance of the prostheses used. The research was undertaken by Professor Stephen Graves, Director of the National Joint Registry and Dr Vanessa Wells, Clinical Research Coordinator at the Repatriation General Hospital in Adelaide.

ACHR Executive Director, Mr Neil Batt, says we need more elements driving efficiency and cost effectiveness in Australia's public and private health sectors and the Prosthesis Register is a good example of what can be done.

"Spending within the health industry will continue to rise year on year. A combination of the ageing population, new drugs and new and improved medical technology make this inevitable, however, whether health consumers are getting value for money is a question that needs to be continually asked.

"One encouraging sign is the shift from cure to prevention. COAG has begun this process but it needs to become a much more dramatic shift. We must accept that hospitalisation is a failure of health care, not a success – thus, if we do not head off the looming and large problem of diabetes, for example, we should consider ourselves to have failed," Mr Batt said. "There are many other, serious healthcare issues that need examining. Two which are being considered by the ACHR at present include:

- ◇ The admittance to hospital of over 65s because of adverse drug reactions;
- ◇ The capacity to measure the performance of both public and private hospitals – the measurement of both is totally inadequate."

The ACHR currently has around 30 issues on which it is considering commissioning research. Once results for each piece of research are known, the Centre will, as appropriate, hold a series of workshops for health industry workers and strategists so they can be discussed widely. Ultimately, the Centre wishes to influence policy.

Mr Batt said Australians had seriously to consider the capacity of the country to pay for the needs of its ageing population.

“Older people use more health services. When that fact is combined with the escalating costs of new drugs and expensive new technologies, the projected figures present a potentially alarming percentage of GDP that may have to be allocated to health care in the future.

“Rather than accept this as inevitable, there needs to be an examination of the roles of both the private and the public sectors.

“Our Centre will contribute to this broad debate. For instance, research commissioned by us and undertaken by an economic consulting group is in the final stages of examining the impact of the Private Health Insurance (PHI) rebate on healthcare provision. We hope to be able to release this paper in about a month.

“These issues and their examination would be greatly assisted by heightened public interest – we hope to do our part by providing continuing stimulus through ongoing research,” Mr Batt added.

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